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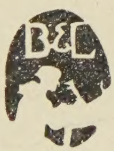
ROGER MARTIN DU GARD

The THIBAULTS

Translated from the French by
MADELEINE BOYD

VOLUME ONE
I. THE GRAY NOTEBOOK
II. THE PENITENTIARY



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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

THESE two volumes contain all that has been written and printed in French of Roger Martin Du Gard's great prose epic entitled LES THIBAULTS. It is a study of contemporary middle-class life in France, drawn from many angles. The concluding volumes of this story will be published in France in the very near future, and the English translation will follow as quickly as possible.

The translator wishes to acknowledge the valuable aid given her in the preparation of this translation by Mr. John Oneal.

I
THE GRAY NOTEBOOK

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VOLUME I

THE THIBAULTS

I

At the corner of the rue de Vaugirard, as they were reaching the school buildings, M. Thibault, who had not said a word to his son all the way, stopped abruptly. "No, Antoine, no, it is the limit this time!"

The young man did not answer.

The school was closed. It was nine in the evening. A porter half opened the wicket.

"Do you know where my brother is?" Antoine said loudly. The porter opened his eyes wide.

M. Thibault stamped his foot. "Go and get Abbé Binot."

The porter preceded the two men to the reception room, took a gaslighter from his pocket and lit the chandelier.

A few minutes went by. M. Thibault, out of breath, sank into a chair, muttering again through clenched teeth—"No, not this time. No, no, not this time!"

"I beg your pardon, Sir," said Abbé Binot, entering noiselessly. He was a very small man, so small that he had to reach up to put his hand on Antoine's shoulder. "Good evening, my young doctor. What is the trouble?"

"Where is my brother?"

"Jacques?"

"He has not come home yet," cried M. Thibault, who had risen from his chair.

"But where has he been?" said the Abbé, not showing much surprise.

"Here, of course. He was kept in."

The Abbé put his hands under his belt.

"Jacques was not kept in."

"What!"

"Jacques did not come to school to-day!"

This information made matters worse. Antoine kept staring at the priest. M. Thibault shrugged his shoulders, and turning his heavy face towards the Abbé, his puffy eyelids half concealing his eyes, said:

"Jacques told us yesterday that he was to be kept in for four hours to-day. He left this morning at the usual time, but came back about eleven o'clock while we were all at mass. Finding no one in but the cook, he told her that he would not be home for lunch, because he was to be kept in eight hours instead of four."

"Pure invention," said the priest emphatically.

"I had to go out towards the end of the afternoon," continued M. Thibault, "to take my paper to the Revue des Deux-Mondes. It was the editor's reception day, and I couldn't get back until dinner-time. Jacques wasn't home yet. When he had not come back by eight-thirty I became frightened, sent for Antoine, who was on duty at the hospital, and here we are!"

The priest bit his lips thoughtfully. M. Thibault opened his eyes a little wider and looked sharply first at the Abbé and then at his son. "Well, Antoine?" he questioned. "Well, father," replied the young man soothingly, "if it is a premeditated escapade, we need no longer fear an accident." M. Thibault took a chair and sat down, his mind alertly considering several possibilities, but his face, weighted down as it was with fat, remained expressionless.

"Well," he repeated, "what shall we do?"

Antoine thought for a minute. "Nothing to-night. Let us wait."

Plainly that was all that could be done. But M. Thibault thought of the Congress of Moral Sciences which was to be held in Brussels two days later, at which he was to be Chairman of the French section, and it angered him that he could not use his authority to settle the matter at once.

"I'll get the police after him," he shouted. "There are still police in France, aren't there? Finding delinquents is part of their duty!"

His cutaway coat flapped around his paunch, his tight collar pinched the folds of his chin and he thrust his jaws forward like a horse pulling at its bit. He thought, "I wish the scamp would get run over by a tram!" That would settle everything, he would be able to speak at the Congress, he might even be made Vice-President. But in a flash he saw the boy on a stretcher, then in a dimly lighted chapel, and himself as an unhappy father, pitied by all. . . . He was ashamed of himself.

"Must I spend a night in torment?" he went on, aloud. "It is hard for a father to have to bear such trials!"

As he was going toward the door, the Abbé drew his hands out of his belt. "Allow me," he said, detaining them without, however, looking up at them. The chandelier shone on his forehead, half-hidden by a black fringe of hair, and on his hypocritical pointed face. Two pink spots appeared on his cheeks.

"I hesitate to tell you to-night something about your boy . . . it happened quite recently . . . it is re-

grettable. But after all, I think it might give you a clue . . . if you have a moment to spare."

His Picardy accent made his hesitating speech sound even more labored. M. Thibault, without saying a word came back to his chair, sat down heavily and closed his eyes.

The Abbé went on. "A few days ago we had to speak to your boy about a fault of a special nature, an extremely serious delinquency. We threatened him with expulsion. Of course, it was to frighten him. He did not mention it to you?"

"Don't you know what a hypocrite he is? As usual, he did not tell me anything!"

"The dear boy, in spite of many grave faults, is not fundamentally bad," interrupted the Abbé, "and we think that on this last occasion he sinned through weakness, by the force of example and under the influence of a dangerous comrade, one of those perverted boys who abound in Paris." M. Thibault looked at the priest uneasily.

"Here are the facts, M. Thibault, in their order. It was last Thursday." He stopped for a second and then went on in a more cheerful tone. "No, excuse me, it was the day before yesterday, Friday, yes, Friday morning, at the study hour, a little before twelve. I entered the room quickly as I always do." He winked at Antoine. "I turned the handle without moving the door and opened it suddenly.

"Well, as I entered, I saw our friend Jacquot, whom I had placed directly opposite the door. I went over to him and pushed aside his dictionary. Caught in the act! I seized the forbidden volume, a novel translated from the Italian, by an author whose name I have forgotten, *The Virgin of the Rocks.*"

"How dreadful!" exclaimed M. Thibault.

"The boy's guilty look seemed to hide something else. You see we are accustomed to that sort of thing. It was nearly lunch time. When the bell sounded I told the study master to take the pupils to the refectory. As soon as I was alone I opened Jacques's desk, and found two other volumes: 'The Confessions of Jean Jacques Rousseau' and another even more disgusting, if you'll pardon me, Sir, an infamous novel by Zola, *Abbé Mouret's Transgression.*"

"Well, really! The scamp!"

"Just as I was about to shut the desk I thought of putting my hand behind the row of textbooks, and there I found a notebook bound in gray buckram, which at first, to tell the truth, did not look at all unusual. I opened it and glanced at the first pages. . . ." The Abbé looked piercingly at the two men and then went harshly on. "I was astonished. I put my finds at once in a safe place and during the midday recess I had ample time to look through them. The books, very carefully bound, bore on the back the letter F. As for the gray notebook, the most incriminating evidence, it had been used for correspondence. There were two different writings, Jacques's own with his signature, J; and another I did not know, the signature being a capital D." He stopped and lowered his voice. "Alas, the tone and the content of the letters did not permit any doubts as to the nature of the friendship.

"So much so, M. Thibault, that for a moment I took this firm and large writing for a girl's or rather a woman's. But by analyzing the text I discovered that it belonged to a friend of Jacques, not one of

our pupils, thank God, but some boy whom Jacques had apparently met at the lycée. To confirm my suspicions, I went the same day to the principal—good M. Quillard—you know," turning to Antoine, "he is stern and has had a lot of experience in the management of boarding schools. We were able to identify the boy immediately. The boy in question who signed himself D was a pupil in his third year, Jacques's comrade, whose name is Fontanin, Daniel de Fontanin."

"Fontanin! I recognize the name!" said Antoine. "You know, father, they are the people who live in the summer at Maisons-Laffite near the forest. I remember now that several times this winter I caught Jacques reading in the evening from books of verses that Fontanin had lent him."

"What! Reading borrowed books? You should have warned me."

"It did not seem very dangerous to me," said Antoine, looking defiantly at the Abbé; and suddenly a very youthful smile brightened up his grave face, but it only lasted a few seconds. "Victor Hugo, Lamartine," he explained. "I took away his lamp so he would get some sleep."

The Abbé pursed his mouth: he had his retort ready. "The worst is yet to come. Fontanin is a Protestant."

"Yes, I know," said M. Thibault, quite overcome.

"He is a very good pupil," went on the priest to show how just he could be. "M. Quillard told me that he is one of the older boys and a serious student, but he must have deceived everybody. His mother is an extremely nice woman."

"Oh, the mother, the mother——" interrupted M. Thibault. "They are both impossible people in spite

of all appearances to the contrary. At Maisons-Laffite no one sees them and only a very few people are on bowing terms with them. Your brother is to be congratulated on the acquaintances he makes!"

"Very dangerous acquaintances," sighed the Abbé; "we all know what is often hidden behind the sober demeanor of the Protestants!

"I came back perfectly satisfied that I was right, and intended to inquire more closely into the matter in the usual way when, yesterday, Saturday, at the beginning of the morning study period, our friend Jacquot burst into my study. His teeth were clenched, he was quite pale, and in a violent rage. He shouted at me from the door without even saying good morning: 'I have been robbed! Someone has stolen my books and papers!' I started to point out to him that his manner of entering was exceedingly disrespectful, but he paid no attention to me. His eyes, usually so clear, were dark with anger. 'You have stolen my notebook! You did it!' That is exactly what he said," added the Abbé with a foolish smile. "'If you dare to read it, I'll kill myself.' I tried to be gentle with him, but he would not let me talk. 'Where is my notebook? Give it back to me! I'll break everything in the room if you don't.'

"Before I had a chance to stop him he seized a crystal paperweight from my desk. You remember it, Antoine? The souvenir that some pupils brought me from Puy-de-Dome. He threw it with all his strength against the marble chimney-piece." The Abbé noticed M. Thibault's humiliation and went on hastily: "It does not matter. I only mention this detail to show you your dear boy's high pitch of excitement. After that he collapsed and rolled on the floor in an hysteri-

cal fit. I was able to get hold of him and lock him in a small recitation room which adjoins my study."

"Yes," said M. Thibault, raising his clenched fists. "There are days when he seems to me like one possessed. Ask Antoine. We have seen him in such a state of fury that he turned purple all over, the veins of his neck were swollen, and he would have choked to death with rage if we had not given in to him, and all on account of some trifling annoyance."

"Of course, all the Thibaults have vile tempers," said Antoine, and he showed so little regret that the Abbé smiled complacently at him.

"When I let him out, an hour later," the Abbé went on, "he was sitting in front of the table, his head between his hands. He looked at me angrily out of dry eyes. I asked him to beg my pardon. He did not answer. He followed me meekly enough into my study, his hair tousled, his eyes lowered, looking very stubborn. I made him pick up the pieces of the unlucky paperweight, but he would not say a word. Then I took him to the chapel and thought it fitting to leave him there, alone for a whole hour, with God. Then I came back and knelt down beside him. It seemed to me that he had been crying but the chapel was dark, so I can't be sure about it. I repeated softly about ten rosaries and then I spoke to him very seriously, telling him how grieved his father would be to hear that the purity of his dear boy had been endangered by a wicked comrade. He folded his arms, held his head up and looked fixedly at the altar as if he did not hear me. When I saw that he was still unrepentant I let him go back to the study hall where he remained until evening in his seat, his arms crossed, without opening a book. I ignored this and at seven

he went away as usual—without, however, coming to say good-by to me.

"That's all, Sir," concluded the priest in a lively manner. "I did not intend to inform you of this matter until I knew what decision the principal of the lycée had taken in the case of that unspeakable Fontanin boy who, of course, will be dismissed. But in view of what has happened to-night——"

"My dear Abbé," said M. Thibault, as out of breath as if he had just stopped running. "I need not say how overcome I am! When I think where such tendencies may lead. . . . I am indeed overcome." His voice was weak, almost inaudible; he sat motionless, with head thrust forward, and hands upon his knees. His eyelids were half shut and made him seem half asleep, but his lower lip was trembling, though this was scarcely noticeable under his gray mustache and white pointed beard.

"The good-for-nothing scamp!" he cried suddenly, thrusting his jaw forward; and his eyes flashed behind his eyelashes in a way which belied his apparent inertia. He shut his eyes again and turned toward Antoine. The young man was stroking his beard, frowning and looking at the floor, and did not speak for a moment.

"I shall stop at the hospital to tell them not to expect me to-morrow; and I shall go to see Fontanin the first thing in the morning," he said finally.

"The first thing in the morning," repeated M. Thibault mechanically. He rose. "Well, no sleep to-night," he sighed, and went to the door. The Abbé followed him. On the threshold, the fat man held out his soft hand to the priest.

"I am overcome," he sighed again without opening his eyes.

"We will pray to the good God to help us all," Abbé Binot said politely.

The father and son walked for a while in silence along the empty street. The wind had stopped and left the evening mild. It was early in May.

M. Thibault was thinking that at least it would not be too cold for the runaway, if he were out without shelter. Emotion made the father's legs a trifle unsteady, but Antoine's presence was reassuring. He loved his eldest son, and he loved him particularly tonight on account of his growing hostility towards the younger. Not that he could not have loved this younger son as well; if he could have been proud of him that would have been enough to awaken his tenderness, but Jacques's escapades and his falling from grace always touched the father's most sensitive spot, his self-esteem.

"I hope it won't create too much talk," he grunted. He went nearer to Antoine and his voice changed. "I am glad you were able to get away to-night," he said; and the feeling he was trying to express embarrassed him. The young man, even more embarrassed than his father, did not answer.

"Antoine . . . I am glad you are with me to-night, dear Antoine," said M. Thibault, putting his arm through his son's, probably for the first time in his life.

II

THAT same Sunday, coming back about twelve o'clock, Mme. de Fontanin found a note from her son in the hall.

"Daniel writes that he is lunching with the Berthiers," she said to Jenny. "You were not here when he came?"

"No, I did not see him," said Jenny, who had just gone down on all fours to get at her little dog which was hiding under an armchair. She stayed there a long time. At last, gathering Puce up in her arms, she went off to her room, jumping about and covering the animal with caresses.

She came down at lunch time, saying, "I have a headache and I'm not hungry. I want to lie down in the dark." Mme. de Fontanin put her to bed and pulled the curtains together. Jenny wrapped herself up in the bedclothes but could not go to sleep. Hours passed. Several times during the day Mme. de Fontanin came and laid her cool hands on the child's forehead. Once in the late afternoon the child anxiously seized her hand and kissed it affectionately, trying in vain not to cry.

"You are very nervous, my darling. You must be feverish."

Seven o'clock came, then eight o'clock. Mme. de Fontanin was waiting for her son because Daniel had never missed a meal without letting her know and had

never left his mother and sister to dine alone on Sundays. She went out on the balcony and peered into the deepening shadows among the trees on the Avenue de l'Observatoire, scrutinizing each occasional passerby and imagining several times that she recognized Daniel's walk in the darkness.

When she heard the drum at the Luxembourg Gardens she knew that the gates were being closed and night had really come. Tired of waiting, she put on her hat and went over to the Berthiers', only to find that the family had gone to the country the day before. So Daniel had lied!

Mme. de Fontanin was accustomed to lies, but a lie from Daniel, who was only fourteen! His first lie!

Jenny, still wakeful, had been listening to all the noises and she called to her mother.

"Where's Daniel?"

"He's gone to bed. He thought you were asleep and did not want to waken you." Her voice sounded natural, for what was the use of frightening the child?

It grew late. Mme. de Fontanin sat in an armchair after leaving the door in the passage ajar so that she would hear the child when he returned. The whole night passed. Daylight came.

About seven o'clock the dog started growling. Someone had rung the bell. Mme. de Fontanin went to the hall door to open it herself as she did not want the servants to know. It was not Daniel, but an unknown bearded young man. Had there been an accident?

Antoine gave his name. He wanted to see Daniel before he went to the lycée.

"I am sorry, but you cannot see him this morning."

Antoine looked astonished. "Please pardon my insistence, Madam, but my brother, who is a great friend of your son, disappeared yesterday and we are frightfully worried."

"Disappeared?" Her hand convulsively grasped the white mantilla which covered her hair. She opened the drawing-room door and Antoine followed her into the room.

"Daniel did not come home either last night, and I, too, am uneasy." She lowered her head, but raised it quickly. "The more so because my husband is away just now," she added.

Antoine had never seen before a face so full of simplicity and frankness. Both because she was worried to distraction after a night of waiting and because she was taken unawares, all her emotions were plainly discernible as they followed one another in rapid succession across her open countenance. They looked at each other for a few moments but both were so occupied with their own thoughts that they only half saw each other.

Antoine had jumped out of bed and started his hunt for Jacques with the zest of a detective. He did not take the escapade seriously but his curiosity was aroused and he had come to quiz the accomplice. Now that he saw the affair to be more complicated than he had expected he was more pleased than annoyed. When events caught him thus by surprise, he became very positive, and under his square beard the strong Thibault jaw grew firm.

"What time did your son leave yesterday morning?" he asked.

"Early in the morning, but he came back later on."

"Ah! Between half-past ten and eleven?"

"Yes, about that time."

"Just like my brother. They must have gone away together," he said, incisively, in a voice that sounded almost gay.

Just then the door, which had been ajar, opened and a child in a nightgown fell forward on to the carpet. Mme. de Fontanin cried out in alarm. Antoine had already picked up the fainting girl and was holding her in his arms. Guided by Mme. de Fontanin, he carried her to her room and laid her upon the bed.

"Allow me, Madame, I am a doctor. Bring me some fresh water. "Have you any ether?"

Soon Jenny regained consciousness and her mother smiled at her, but the little girl's eyes did not return the smile.

"It's all right now," said Antoine. "We ought to make her go to sleep."

"Do you hear, my darling," said Mme. de Fontanin softly and her hand resting on the moist forehead went to the child's eyelids and held them shut.

They were standing, one on each side of the bed, motionless, while the smell of ether filled the room. Antoine, who had been looking at the graceful hand and arm of Mme. de Fontanin, examined her discreetly. The lace which she had wrapped around her head had fallen and he saw that her hair was fair but streaked with gray. He judged her to be about forty, although her manner and the mobility of her features made her seem to be a young woman.

Since Jenny seemed to be asleep Mme. de Fontanin lifted her hand from the child's eyes as lightly as if it were a bird's feather. They left the room on tip-

toe, leaving the door ajar. Mme. de Fontanin went out first and then turned to him.

"Thank you," she said, holding out both her hands. The gesture was so unaffected and simple that Antoine took her hands and pressed them in his, without daring to kiss them.

"My child is very nervous," she explained. "She must have heard Puce barking and thought her brother was coming. Since yesterday morning she has not felt well and she seemed feverish all night." They sat down and Mme. de Fontanin took out of her blouse the note written the day before by her son, and handed it to Antoine. While he was reading she kept looking at him. Always in all her relations with people, she let herself be guided by her intuition and from the first she had felt a great confidence in Antoine. Surely a man with such a forehead would be incapable of doing anything mean. His hair was brushed back and his beard grew rather thickly on his cheeks, so that between the two dark patches of reddish-brown hair, the sunken eyes and the white rectangle of his forehead were all that could be seen of his face. He folded the letter and gave it back to her. He appeared to be thinking about what he had just read, but in reality, he was wondering how he could explain certain things to her.

"I myself believe," he began, "that there is a connection between their flight and the fact that their friendship . . . their relationship has just been discovered by their teachers."

"Discovered?"

"Yes, they exchanged correspondence by means of a special notebook which has just been found."

"A correspondence?"

"Yes, they wrote to each other during classes and it appears that the correspondence was of a very peculiar character." He stopped looking at her. "The letters were of such a kind that the two culprits were threatened with expulsion."

"Culprits? I must say I don't quite understand. Of what were they guilty? Of writing to each other?"

"The tone of the letters, it appears, was very . . ."

"The tone of the letters?" She did not understand. But she was too sensitive a person to be unaware of Antoine's growing embarrassment; and suddenly she shook her head.

"It is absolutely impossible," she said in a strained, agitated voice. It seemed as if a gulf had come between them. She rose. "It is quite possible that your brother and my son may have got into a scrape together, though Daniel has never mentioned the name of . . . ?"

"Thibault."

"Thibault?" she repeated with surprise, without ending her sentence. "It is strange, last night in a nightmare, my daughter said that name very plainly."

"Perhaps she has heard her brother talk about his friend."

"But I am telling you that Daniel never has . . ."

"Then how could she have known?"

"Oh!" she said, "such occult phenomena occur very frequently."

"I do not understand."

"Telepathic phenomena," she explained, in an earnest and abstracted manner.

The explanation and the tone in which it was uttered were so new to Antoine, that he looked at her curiously. Mme. de Fontanin's face was not only earnest, but

illumined, and on her lips was the half smile of the believer accustomed to the skepticism of others.

There was a silence. An idea came suddenly to Antoine; and he was the detective once more.

"I beg your pardon, Madame, but you have told me that your daughter spoke my brother's name and that all day yesterday she had an inexplicable fever. Could your son, by chance, have said something to her?"

"You would not entertain that suspicion for an instant," answered Mme. de Fontanin, indulgently, "if you knew my children and their attitude towards me. Neither of them has ever hidden anything from . . ." She stopped, for she had just been struck by the inconsistency of her statement with Daniel's conduct. She went on rather haughtily, going to the door. "Anyway, if Jenny is not asleep, let us question her."

The little girl's sensitive face, eyes wide open, cheeks feverish, was sharply outlined on the pillow. She held her little dog in her arms, and its black nose stuck out comically at the edge of the sheet.

"Jenny, here is M. Thibault. You know he is the brother of a friend of Daniel's."

The child looked at him searchingly, and then distrustfully.

Antoine approached the bed, took the little girl's wrist, and pulled out his watch.

"Still going too fast," he said, and sounded her lungs. He brought a satisfied gravity to all his professional gestures.

"How old is she?"

"She'll soon be thirteen."

"Really? I should not have believed it. As a general rule, one must watch these sudden fevers without worrying much, however," he said, looking at the

child and smiling. Then moving away from the bed he addressed himself to Jenny, assuming another tone.

"Do you know my brother, Jacques Thibault?"

She frowned and shook her head.

"Honestly? Has your brother never spoken to you about his best friend?"

"Never."

"Yet," Madame de Fontanin interrupted, "yet last night you remember when I woke you you were dreaming that somebody was pursuing Daniel and his friend Thibault on a road; you said Thibault quite distinctly." The child seemed to think, and said at last:

"I don't know that name."

Antoine, after a moment's silence, went on. "I came to ask your mother about something she had forgotten which we must know, if we are to find your brother. Can you tell us how he was dressed?"

"I don't know."

"Then you did not see him yesterday morning?"

"Oh, yes, at breakfast, but he was not dressed yet." Then she turned to her mother. "Why don't you look in his wardrobe and see which of his clothes are missing?"

"Another thing, my child, and it is very important. Was it nine, or ten, or eleven when your brother came back to leave the letter? Your mother was not here and can't be sure."

"I don't know."

He thought he could detect a little irritation in Jenny's voice.

"Well," he said, in a discouraged way, "it is going to be very hard to find out where he is!"

"Wait," she said, lifting her arm to detain him. "It was ten to eleven."

"Exactly? You are sure of that?"

"Yes."

"You looked at the clock while he was with you?"

"No, but at that time I went to the kitchen to get some bread to clean my drawing and if he had come before, or after, I'd have heard the door and gone out to look."

"Yes, that's right." He thought for an instant. It would do no good to tire her. He had been mistaken. She knew nothing. Becoming the doctor once more, he said, "Now you must stay in bed, shut your eyes and sleep." He covered her little arm with the counterpane and smiled. "A good sleep and when you wake you'll be well again, and your big brother will be back."

She looked at him and he was never to forget her expression. It made clear to him her intense inner life, wretched in its solitude, but at the same time completely indifferent to consolation from without. Touched by this revelation of her innermost being he lowered his eyes involuntarily.

"You were right, Madame," he said, when they had returned to the drawing-room. "That child is innocence itself. She is suffering greatly but she knows nothing."

"She is innocence itself," Mme. de Fontanin repeated dreamily, "but she knows."

"She knows?"

"She knows."

"On the contrary her answers show . . ."

"Her answers, yes," she went on slowly, "but I was close to her and I felt . . . I do not know how to explain it." She sat down, but got up again almost at once. Her face betrayed her anguish. "Now, I am

sure that she knows," she cried suddenly, "and I also feel that she would die rather than divulge her secret."

After Antoine's departure and before going on his advice to see M. Quillard, the principal of the lycée, Mme. de Fontanin gave way to her curiosity, and opened "Who's Who."

> THIBAULT (Oscar-Marie) Chevalier of the Legion of Honor. Ex-Member of Chamber of Deputies. Vice-President of the League for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency. Founder and Director of the Association for the Preservation of Society. Treasurer of the Association of Catholic Charities for the Dioceses of Paris. No. 4, bis Rue de l'Université (Vl e arr.)

III

Two hours later, after visiting the principal, whose office she had left without a word, her face flushed with shame, not knowing to whom to turn for advice, she thought of M. Thibault; but her intuition told her not to go to him. Yet contrary to her usual practice she did not obey it, because of a love of risk and action, which she mistook for courage.

A real family council was in progress at the Thibaults'. Abbé Binot had arrived very early, preceding by a few minutes Abbé Vécard, the private secretary to the Archbishop of Paris, M. Thibault's spiritual adviser and trusted friend. He had just been informed by telephone of what had happened.

M. Thibault sat at his desk and looked as if he were presiding in a courtroom. He had slept very badly and his white face was even paler than usual. M. Chasle, his secretary, a small man with gray hair and spectacles, sat at his left.

Antoine, looking very thoughtful, leaned against the bookcase. Mademoiselle herself had been called in, although this was her busy hour. She was primly dressed in cashmere and sat on the edge of her chair, mute and all attention, her gray hair, which was parted in the middle, lying flat on her ivory forehead and her doelike glance flitting incessantly from one priest to the other. These gentlemen had been installed on each side of the mantelpiece in high-backed armchairs.

After telling of the results of Antoine's inquiry, M. Thibault began his tale of woe, enjoying the sensation of being approved by those present. The words that he found to tell of his grief moved him nearly to tears, although the presence of his confessor made him probe his conscience carefully. Had he done all he could for his unfortunate son? He did not know how to answer this question. He evaded it by turning his thoughts in another direction. Nothing would have happened if it hadn't been for that good-for-nothing Protestant boy.

He rose and said threateningly: "Should not such rascals as Fontanin be confined in reformatories founded for that very purpose? Should we allow our children to be exposed to such examples?" He paced back and forth, his hands behind his back, his eyes half shut. Though he did not mention it, the thought of having missed the Congress added to his bitterness. "You know I have devoted my life to the problems of juvenile delinquency! For twenty years I have been fighting for Reformation Societies, with pamphlets and reports to all the conventions! More than that," he went on, turning to the priests and addressing them directly: "Did I not arrange, in my reform school in Crouy, a separate house, where delinquent children belonging to good families undergo a special kind of training? Well, I know it is hard to believe, but it is true nevertheless; that particular house is always empty. Must I force parents to send their children there? I have done my best to make the Ministry of Education take an interest in our enterprise. Of course," he ended, shrugging his shoulders and sitting down again, "what do the directors of godless schools care about social hygiene?"

At that moment the maid handed him a visiting card.

"She is here," he said, turning to his son.

"What does she want?" he asked the maid, and without waiting for an answer, he said, "you go to her, Antoine."

"You'll have to see her," said Antoine, after looking at the card.

M. Thibault started to get angry but controlled himself at once and addressed the two priests: "Madame de Fontanin! What am I to do, gentlemen? We have to be courteous to women, whoever they may be; and after all, she is a mother, isn't she?"

"What? A mother?" muttered M. Chasle, but in such a low tone that he must have been talking to himself.

M. Thibault went on:

"Ask the lady to come in," and when the maid had ushered in the visitor, he rose and bowed ceremoniously.

Mme. de Fontanin had not expected to see so many people. She came in with an imperceptible hesitation, and went up to Mademoiselle, who had risen hastily and was staring at the Protestant woman with frightened eyes. She was languid no longer, looking now more like a frightened hen than like a doe.

"Madame Thibault?" murmured Mme. de Fontanin.

"No, Madame," Antoine hastened to explain, "Mademoiselle de Vaize. She has been living with us for fourteen years—since my mother's death—and she brought us up, my brother and myself."

M. Thibault introduced the men.

"I am sorry to disturb you, Sir," said Mme. de Fontanin, rather frightened by all the eyes fixed upon her,

but perfectly composed, nevertheless. "I came to see if, since this morning . . . We are both afflicted in the same way and I thought maybe the best thing was . . . for us to get together. Don't you think so?" she went on, attempting to smile; and her smile was both friendly and sad. Her frank appeal to M. Thibault elicited no response.

She looked at Antoine, and in spite of the distance which their encounter had placed between them, her impulse was to turn to him. Antoine himself had since her entrance felt that an alliance existed between them. He approached her: "How is our small patient this morning, Madame?"

M. Thibault interrupted hastily. His nervousness could be seen plainly by the way he jerked his chin out of his collar. He turned towards Mme. de Fontanin and began very decidedly:

"I do not need to tell you, Madame, that no one can better understand your distress than I myself. As I have been telling these gentlemen, we cannot think of these poor children without our heart bleeding for them; and yet, Madame, I do not hesitate to ask: is concerted action on our parts desirable? Of course, we must act, they must be found, but would it not be better to have our inquiries kept separate? I mean to say: must we not fear above all else the indiscretions of the newspapers? Don't be surprised if I talk to you as a man whose position requires a certain amount of caution in his dealings with the press and public opinion. . . . Not on my account, no, certainly not, I am, God be thanked, accustomed to the insults of the other party. But through me the good work I represent might be attacked, and I am thinking also of my son. Must I not avoid, at any cost, in such a delicate

situation, the coupling of another name with ours? Is not my first duty to act so that no one may be able to throw in the face of my son a certain relationship—quite accidental, it is true—but of a kind highly prejudicial to him?" In concluding he turned to Abbé Vécard, and opened his eyes for a second. "Don't you agree with me, gentlemen?"

Mme. de Fontanin had grown pale. She looked from one priest to the other, then to Mademoiselle and to Antoine. Everywhere she met expressionless faces. She cried out:

"Oh, I see, that . . ." but her voice gave way. She began again with an effort: "I see that M. Quillard's suspicions . . ." Once more she stopped. "M. Quillard is a very poor sort of man, yes, a very poor sort of man," she ended at last with a bitter smile.

M. Thibault's face remained expressionless, but his soft hand was raised towards Abbé Binot as if he wanted him to take especial notice of what had been said, and also to give him the floor. The Abbé threw himself into the fray with all the joy of a mongrel pup.

"Allow me to draw your attention, Madame, to the fact that you deny M. Quillard's conclusions without even knowing what charges are brought against your son."

Mme. de Fontanin, after a withering look at Abbé Binot, let her instinct about people guide her once more and turned to Abbé Vécard. He returned her gaze with perfect composure. His sleepy face, which seemed lengthened by the scanty hair brushed up over his baldness, showed him to be about fifty. Understanding the mute appeal of the heretic he hastened to interfere:

"Everybody here, Madame, understands how painful this interview is for you. The confidence you show in your son is indeed very touching . . . highly commendable in fact . . ." he added, and his fingers went up to his lips, though he continued speaking—it was a nervous trick he had. "But, Madame, the facts, alas . . ."

"The facts," went on Abbé Binot, in a more kindly manner, since his colleague had now given the right tone to the conversation, "Madame, we must be frank, the facts are overwhelming."

"Please," murmured Mme. de Fontanin, turning away.

But the Abbé could not restrain himself.

"Here is the proof." He put down his hat and pulled from his belt a gray notebook with red edges. "Look at it! However cruel it may be to take away your illusions, I think it is necessary that you should know!"

He stepped towards her, meaning to make her take the notebook. But she rose hastily. "I will not read a line of it, gentlemen. I refuse to pry into my child's secrets, publicly, without his knowledge, without giving him a chance to explain. I have not taught him to expect such treatment." Abbé Binot was still holding out the notebook, with a vexed smile on his thin lips.

"I shall not insist," he said at last in a sarcastic tone. He laid the notebook down on the desk, picked up his hat and took his seat again. Antoine felt like putting his hand on the Abbé's shoulders and pushing him out of the room. His eyes betrayed his antipathy and when they met Abbé Vécard's for a moment the priest returned his glance understandingly.

Mme. de Fontanin's attitude had changed, for she wore a defiant expression now and stood before them undismayed. She went up to M. Thibault who had moved from his armchair.

"All this is beside the point. I only came to ask you what you intend to do. My husband is away just now and I must decide alone. I especially wanted to beg you not to ask the help of the police."

"The police," repeated M. Thibault, and he rose in great irritation. "But, Madame, don't you know that the police are already busy throughout the country? I telephoned the Chief of Police myself this morning so that everything possible might be done with the greatest possible discretion. I had a telegram sent to Maisons-Laffite, in case the fugitives had thought of hiding in a country they both know quite well. The railway stations, the frontiers and the ports are all being watched. Yes, Madame, were it not for the scandal which I am willing to avoid at any cost—should we not want to see the scamps brought back to us handcuffed between two policemen? It would do them good if only to remind them that there is, in our unhappy country, a justice that will help parents to exercise their authority."

Without answering him Mme. de Fontanin bowed and went toward the door.

M. Thibault was himself again. "At least, you may be sure, Madame, that if we receive any news my son will let you know at once."

She inclined her head slightly and went out accompanied by Antoine and followed by M. Thibault.

"There goes the Huguenot!" jeered Abbé Binot as soon as she had disappeared.

Abbé Vécard was unable to suppress a gesture of disapproval.

"What? A Huguenot?" muttered M. Chasle, drawing back as if he had put his foot into a pool of blood at the massacre of Saint Bartholomew.

IV

Mme. de Fontanin went home and found Jenny sleeping fitfully. As her mother entered the room, she raised her feverish head and opened her eyes inquiringly, but shut them again immediately.

"Take Puce away, mother. He makes too much noise." Mme. de Fontanin went back to her room, and since she felt dizzy sat down at once without even taking off her gloves. Was she too going to be ill? She must be calm, strong, full of confidence. . . . She bent her head in prayer and when she lifted it she knew what to do. She must get word to her husband. She must ask him to come back.

She crossed the hall, hesitated a minute in front of a closed door, and then opened it. The room was cool and empty, filled with a fresh invigorating smell of verbena and citronella. She drew open the curtains. A desk stood in the center of the room. Dust lay on the writing-pad but there was no stray paper anywhere, no address, no clue. The keys were all there. Evidently the person to whom it belonged was not suspicious. She pulled open the drawer of the desk and disclosed a bundle of letters, some photographs, a fan, and in a corner, rolled up, a cheap glove of black silk floss. Her hand stiffened suddenly on the edge of the table. Memories flooded her mind, and she could think of nothing but the past. . . . Two years ago as she

was spending a summer evening riding in a tram, she thought she had seen—she stood up in order to see—she had recognized Jérôme her husband, sitting beside a woman—yes, a young woman who was crying on a bench. A hundred times since her imagination had dwelt on this scene, filling in the details. The vulgar sorrow of this woman, whose hat was all askew, and who sat there pulling from underneath her skirt a coarse white handkerchief. But what had struck her most was Jérôme's attitude! She was sure she knew how he felt. He pitied the woman, of course, because she knew him to be weak and easily moved; he was a little annoyed also to have to endure such a scene in the street; he was going to be cruel. In his attitude towards this woman she had seen the selfish calculations of the lover who is through, who is already bent on other pleasures, and who in spite of his pity, and secret shame, has decided to use tears to put an end to the affair! All this had been plain to her in one instant, and every time the scene came back to her she was seized by the same giddiness which brought her to the verge of fainting.

She left the room quickly and locked the door. An idea had come to her. Young Mariette, the servant she had been obliged to send away six months ago . . . Mme. de Fontanin knew her address in her new position. She overcame her disgust and started out without any more ado.

The kitchen was on the fourth floor and she went up the service stairs. It was the dull hour of dish-washing, and Mariette opened the door, a blonde with unruly hair and trusting eyes, only a child. She was alone and she blushed but her eyes showed that she was pleased:

"I am so glad to see you again, Madame! Is Mademoiselle Jenny still growing?"

Mme. de Fontanin hesitated, smiling sadly.

"Mariette . . . will you give me Monsieur's address?"

The young girl blushed deeply and opened wide her eyes full of rising tears. His address? She shook her head, she did not know it, that is to say, she did not know it any longer. Monsieur was not now in the hotel where . . . Monsieur had abandoned her almost at once, did Madame not know? she asked.

Mme. de Fontanin looked away and moved backwards toward the door, afraid that she might have to listen to more. There was a moment's silence, and as the water for the dishes began to boil over on to the stove with a spluttering noise, Mme. de Fontanin said mechanically:

"Your water is boiling over," and still moving backwards she added: "At least, I hope that you are happy here, my child?"

Mariette made no answer, but when Mme. de Fontanin raising her head looked at her, she saw in the child's eyes something primitive, the look of a hunted animal. Her childish lips were half-opened, showing her teeth. After a moment's hesitation, which seemed endless to both of them, the girl said:

"Have you tried asking . . . Madame Petit-Dutreuil?"

Mme. de Fontanin did not hear her bursting into tears. She fled down the stairs as if the house were on fire. That name was the key to a hundred half-forgotten thoughts which she had never previously associated. Now they suddenly took shape and became coherent.

An empty cab was passing and she hailed it to go home, but as she paused to give her address, an irresistible impulse seized her. She was sure she was following an impulse from the Holy Spirit.

"Rue de Monceau," she said.

A quarter of an hour later she was ringing the doorbell of her cousin, Noémie Petit-Dutreuil.

A blonde young girl about fifteen years of age, with welcoming eyes, opened the door.

"Good morning, Nicole, is your mother at home?" She felt the child's astonished look; "I'll tell her you are here, Aunt Thérèse!"

Mme de Fontanin was left alone in the hall. Her heart was beating so violently that she had to put her hand over it and dared not take it away again. She forced herself to look around her. The drawing-room door was open and the sun shone upon the colored draperies and carpets. The room had a neglected and pleasing appearance, like a bachelor's sitting room.

Mme. de Fontanin thought, "and yet people say that her divorce left her without any resources." That reminded her that her husband had not given her any money for the last two months and she did not know how she was going to meet the household expenses. She had a fleeting idea that perhaps Noémie's affluence . . .

Nicole did not come back, and everything was silent. Mme. de Fontanin, more and more depressed, entered the drawing-room to sit down. The piano was open, a fashion magazine lay on the couch, some cigarettes were scattered upon a low table and a bunch of red carnations filled a bowl. As she looked about her depression increased. What could be the matter?

Oh, it was because she recognized his presence in every detail; it was he who had placed the piano that way, in front of the window, just as it was in her own house; it was he, no doubt, who had left it open and if he himself hadn't scattered the music in disorder, at any rate it was for him that it had been done; it was he who had wanted that low sofa, with the cigarettes within his reach; and she could visualize him stretched among the cushions, with his air of ease and refinement, his gay eyes, his arm outstretched, holding a cigarette between his fingers.

A quiet step on the carpet made her wince. Noémie appeared in a lacy house gown, her arm on her daughter's shoulder. She was about thirty-five, tall, dark and rather plump.

"Good morning, Thérèse, you will have to excuse me. I have been having a terrific headache and I can hardly stand. Pull down the blinds, Nicole!" Everything about her gave the lie to this statement. Her shining eyes, her bright complexion and her flow of words showed how little she had expected this visit. She became uneasy when Aunt Thérèse, turning to the child, said to her sweetly: "I want to talk to your mother, dear; will you leave us for a few minutes?"

"Go to your room and work," said Noémie. Then with a shrill laugh she turned to her cousin: "It is perfectly unbearable the way she tries to show off in the drawing-room, at her age! Is Jenny like that, too? I must say that I was just that way myself. Do you remember? I used to drive my mother wild."

Mme. de Fontanin had come to get the address she needed, but since her arrival Jérôme's presence was so real to her, the outrage so obvious, and Noémie herself, with her full-blown vulgar beauty so offensive

that, giving way again to impulse, she made a rash decision.

"Do sit down, Thérèse," said Noémie, but instead Thérèse went up to her cousin and held out her hand. There was nothing theatrical about this gesture. It was spontaneous and very dignified.

"Noémie," she said at once, "give me back my husband." Mme. Petit-Dutreuil's conventional smile froze on her face. Mme. de Fontanin was still holding her hand: "Please wait. I am not reproaching you. Doubtless, it is he, who . . . I know what a charmer he is. . . ." She stopped for a second, overwhelmed with grief. Noémie did not attempt to defend herself and Mme. de Fontanin was grateful for her silence. It was not a confession but it showed that she was not clever enough to parry such a direct attack. "Listen, Noémie, our children are growing up. Your daughter and my two children. Daniel is over fourteen—his father's example might be fatal. Wrongdoing is contagious. This thing must stop, you know. Soon I won't be the only one to see things and . . . to suffer." She was breathing with difficulty, but she added beseechingly: "Give him back to us. Now, Noémie."

"But I assure you, Thérèse . . . you are mad!" The young woman had recovered her poise and now her eyes flashed and she bit her lips. "Yes, indeed, Thérèse, you are mad. And I was so taken aback that I let you go on. You are dreaming or else you have been listening to some scandal-mongers. Please explain yourself."

Without answering Mme. de Fontanin looked kindly and carefully at her cousin, as much as to say: "Poor lost soul, you are worth more than the life you lead!"

However, she became aware suddenly of Noémie's shoulder, her bare flesh, blooming and plump, breathing regularly under the lace, like an animal taken in a net. The vision which this brought to her mind was so precise that she had to shut her eyes. An expression first of hatred, then of suffering passed over her face. In order to put an end to the scene, she said, as if all her courage had suddenly deserted her:

"I may be mistaken. . . . Give me his address, or rather—I don't want you to tell me where he is, but please let him know that I must see him. . . ."

Noémie drew herself up:

"Let him know? What makes you think I know where he is?" She had become very red. "Well, really I should like to know the meaning of all this! Jérôme comes to see me once in a while, it is true. What of it? Aren't we cousins? He comes openly. Is that so reprehensible?" Her intention made her say whatever could hurt most. "How pleased he will be when I tell him about all the fuss you're making!"

Mme. de Fontanin drew back: "You speak like a whore!"

"Is that so? Well, let me tell you something. When a woman loses her husband it is her own fault. If Jérôme had found in your society what he doubtless seeks elsewhere, you wouldn't be here looking for him, my dear!"

Mme. de Fontanin wondered if what Noémie said could be true. She was at the end of her tether and strongly tempted to escape but dreading finding herself alone, without the address, without knowing how to reach Jérôme, she softened.

"Noémie, please forget what I said and listen to me. Jenny is very ill. She has had a fever for two days

and I am alone. You are a mother and you know what it is to watch at the bedside of a child beginning a serious illness. Jérôme has not come home for three weeks. Where is he? What is he doing? He should know that his daughter is ill. He must come back. Tell him!"

With a cruel stubbornness Noémie shook her head.

"Noémie, you can't possibly be as wicked as that. I suppose I'll have to tell you all. It is true that Jenny is ill, and that I am very upset, but that's not the worst." Her voice became still humbler. "Daniel has left me. He has disappeared."

"Disappeared!"

"Some inquiries will have to be made. I can't be left alone in such a crisis . . . with a sick child. . . . Please, Noémie, the only thing you need tell him is that he must come back!"

Mme. de Fontanin thought the young woman was weakening. She looked as if she understood at last; but then she turned, raised her arms and asked:

"What can I do about it? I tell you I can't do anything for you!" And as Mme. de Fontanin was silent, in horror, she turned back to her, suddenly, her face flaming red: "You do not believe me, Thérèse, do you? Well, then, you shall know everything! He has deceived me again, do you understand? He has gone I don't know where—gone with another woman. Now do you believe me?"

Mme. de Fontanin's face became paler. She repeated mechanically: "Gone?"

The young woman had thrown herself upon the couch and was sobbing amongst the cushions.

"If you only knew how much he has made me suffer. I have forgiven him so often that he thinks I will al-

ways do so. No, never again! He has insulted me most grievously this time. Before my eyes, in my own house, he seduced a wretched creature that I had here, a miserable slavey—nineteen years old. A fortnight ago she left, without giving notice, with all her belongings. And he was waiting for her downstairs in a carriage! Yes," she shouted, straightening up, "in my own street, in front of my house, in broad daylight, for everybody to see. . . . He left me for a servant!"

Mme. de Fontanin had to steady herself against the piano to keep from falling. She was looking at Noémie without seeing her. She thought of his affair with Mariette several months back, she saw again the signs, the furtive meetings. She had been forced to face things as they were, to send away the child who cried desperately and asked Madame to forgive her. She thought also of the woman crying on the quay, a poor working girl dressed in black. Then she saw Noémie close beside her, turned away. In spite of herself she looked back at her again—at this beautiful creature sprawling on the couch, her bare shoulders covered with lace, shaken by her sobs. It was intolerable.

Noémie's voice reached her from time to time.

"This is the end, the end. He can come back! He can go down on his knees to me, but I won't look at him, I despise him! I have caught him lying a hundred times, lying instinctively, for the pure pleasure of it. He lies as easily as he talks. He's a born liar."

"You are unjust, Noémie."

The young woman rose suddenly.

"You defend him, you!"

Mme. de Fontanin was herself again and she answered in quite another tone.

"You haven't the address of that . . ." Noémie thought for a minute, then leaned towards her familiarly:

"No, but maybe the concierge . . .?"

Thérèse stopped her with a gesture and went to the door. Noémie hid her face again amongst the cushions and seemed oblivious of her cousin's departure.

In the hall, as Mme. de Fontanin was drawing aside the curtain at the entrance, she was caught in Nicole's arms and saw that the child's face was covered with tears. The child had kissed her fervently and disappeared before she had time to speak.

The concierge was quite willing to talk.

"I have been sending her letters on to her home in Brittany, to Perros-Guirec; her parents forward them. If you are interested," and she opened a greasy register.

Before going home Mme. de Fontanin entered a post office, took a telegraph form, and wrote:

"Victorine le Gad. Place de l'Eglise, Perros-Guirec (Cotes du Nord).

"Please tell M. de Fontanin that his son has been missing since Sunday."

Then she bought a letter card:

"M. le Pasteur Gregory,
Christian Scientist Society,
2 bis, Boulevard Bineau,
Neuilly-sur-Seine.
Dear James,

Daniel disappeared two days ago and I have had no

news from him. I am very much worried. My Jenny is ill. She has a very high fever, unexplained as yet, and I don't know where to find Jérôme to let him know.

I am very lonely, my friend. Come to see me.

THÉRÈSE DE FONTANIN."

V

At six in the evening, two days later, a tall man, sparsely built, frightfully thin and of uncertain age, went to Mme. de Fontanin's house on the Avenue de l'Observatoire.

"I doubt whether Madame will see anyone," the concierge told him. "The doctors are here and Jenny is dying."

The pastor went upstairs. The door on the landing was open and there were several coats in the hall. A nurse went by in a hurry.

"I am Pastor Gregory. What has happened? Is Jenny suffering a great deal?"

The nurse looked at him: "She is dying," she said, and disappeared.

He shrank as if he had been struck. The air suddenly seemed to have become very close, and he struggled for breath. He went into the drawing-room and opened both windows.

Ten minutes passed. People kept going by in the passage and the doors kept banging. He heard some voices and Mme. de Fontanin came in, followed by two elderly men dressed in black. She saw Gregory and went up to him:

"At last! James! Oh, my dear friend, do not abandon me."

He whispered: "I just came back from London today."

She took him with her, leaving the two doctors to their consultation. In the hall Antoine, in his shirt sleeves, was scrubbing his nails in a basin the nurse was holding for him. Mme. de Fontanin had taken the pastor's hand in hers. She was almost unrecognizable. Her cheeks were sunken and deadly pale, and her mouth trembled ceaselessly.

"Stay with me, James. Don't leave me alone. Jenny is . . ."

Groans could be heard from the other end of the apartment. She did not finish her sentence, but ran to the bedroom.

The pastor went up to Antoine. He said nothing, but his eyes asked an anxious question. Antoine shook his head.

"There is no hope."

"Why do you say that?" Gregory's tone reproached him.

"Men—in—gitis!" Antoine emphasized each syllable and raised his hand to his forehead, thinking: "What a fellow!"

Gregory's face was yellow and angular; his black hair, without life or luster, fringed an exceptionally straight forehead. His long hooked nose was shining red; on either side of it his black eyes, almost hidden by bushy eyebrows, glowed as if they were phosphorescent. They were always moist and surprisingly mobile, with very little white showing. They had the alternate brilliancy and lifelessness of the eyes of certain species of monkeys. The lower part of his face was even more unusual. A peculiar smile and an inhuman sneer almost distorted his chin; it was hairless and its parchmentlike skin clung to the bone.

"Was the attack very sudden?" asked the pastor.

"The fever began on Sunday but the symptoms were not clear till yesterday morning, Tuesday. We held a consultation at once. Everything possible has been done." He became pensive. "We'll see what the other doctors say, but so far as I can judge," and his face became very grave, "the poor child is . . ."

"Don't!" interrupted the pastor in a hoarse voice. He was staring at Antoine and the irritation in his eyes did not match the strange smile lingering about his mouth. He put his hand up to his collar as if it were choking him. His skeletonlike hand clutching at his chin looked like a spider seen in a nightmare.

Antoine watched the pastor with his professional eye and thought: "What extraordinary asymmetries! He has the grin and the expressionless face of a maniac."

"Has Daniel come back?" Gregory asked very politely.

"We have no news of him!"

"Poor woman! Poor woman!" he muttered in an affectionate tone.

Just then the two doctors came out of the drawing-room and Antoine hurried up to them.

"She is lost," said the older in a very nasal voice, laying his hand upon Antoine's shoulder. Antoine turned at once towards the pastor.

The nurse, as she passed them, lowered her voice to ask: "Doctor, do you really think that she is . . ." And Gregory turned away so that he would not hear the dreadful word again. The choking sensation became unbearable to him. Through the opened door he saw the stairs. In a few strides he went down, crossed the Avenue, and ran along under the trees, laughing in his extraordinary way, his hair in disorder, his hands,

that were like the legs of a field spider, crossed upon his chest. He breathed the night air deeply.

"Damned doctors," he grumbled. He was as devoted to the Fontanins as if they were his own family. Sixteen years ago when he had arrived in Paris without a penny in his pocket, it was Pastor Perrier, Thérèse's father, who had made him welcome and helped him. He had never forgotten it. Later, during the last illness of his benefactor, he had left everything to be at his bedside and as the old pastor lay dying, one hand in his daughter's and the other in Gregory's, he called Gregory his son. This memory seemed so painful to him just then that he turned around and went back. The doctors' carriage was no longer outside the house. He went up quickly.

The doors were still ajar. Groans guided him to the sick room, where the curtains were drawn and the shadows seemed full of moans and painful breathing. Mme. de Fontanin, the nurse and the maid were bending over the bed with difficulty holding down the small body which wriggled and bent like a fish jumping on the grass.

Gregory stood silent for a time, his chin in his hand, his face full of hatred. Then he bent toward Mme. de Fontanin: "They'll kill your little girl."

"What? They'll kill her? How?" she said, grasping Jenny's arm, which had been constantly escaping her.

"If you don't send them away," he went on stoutly, "they'll kill your child."

"Whom do you mean?"

"Everybody."

All distraught she looked up at him. Had she heard

correctly? Gregory's bilious face, quite close to hers, terrified her.

He had caught one of Jenny's hands and bending towards the child he called in a soft chanting voice:

"Jenny, Jenny! Dearest! Do you know me? Do you know me?" Her rolling eyes, fixed on the ceiling, veered slowly towards the pastor's. Bending still more, he gazed into her eyes so firmly and so clearly that the child suddenly ceased moaning.

"Leave her!" he said then to the three women, and as none of them obeyed him, he went on, without moving his head, with an irresistible air of authority: "Give me her other hand. All right. Now leave me."

They stepped aside. He was left alone, bending over the bed, forcing his magnetic will into her dying eyes. The two arms he held moved aimlessly for a long while, and then stopped. The legs kept on moving, but soon they too relaxed quietly. At last his eyes mastered her own and she shut them. Gregory, still bending over her, signaled to Mme. de Fontanin to come near him:

"You see," he snarled, "she is silent, she is calmer. Send them away, I say; send away those children of Belial! Error predominates in them. Error will kill your little child!" He was smiling the quiet smile of a seer possessed of eternal truth, to whom the rest of the world seems insane. Without looking away from Jenny's eyes, he lowered his voice:

"Woman, woman, Evil does not exist! You create it, you give it its harmful power, because you fear it, because you accept it! Look! Not one of them has any hope left. They all say: 'She is . . .' You yourself believe and have almost said: 'She is . . . !' O Lord God! Put a watcher at my mouth, put a watcher

at the door of my lips! Poor little thing, only emptiness and negation when I arrived were around her!

"And I say: She is not sick!" he cried with such contagious conviction that the three women were electrified. "She is in good health, but please leave me!"

With all the incantations of a magician he had slowly unclasped her fingers from his own, and moving backward he let the limbs of the child go and they relaxed quietly in the bed.

"Life is good!" he asserted in a musical voice. "Substance is good! Intelligence is good and Love is good! Christ is all health and Christ is within us!"

He turned to the maid and the nurse who had retired to the other end of the room: "Please leave me."

"Go," said Mme. de Fontanin, but Gregory drew himself to his full height and his outstretched arm cursed the table where the bandages and the pail of ice lay: "Take everything away!" he ordered. The women obeyed him.

When he was alone with Mme. de Fontanin, he shouted gayly: "Now open the window! Open it wide, my dear!"

A fresh breeze made the foliage on the Avenue rustle, and seemed to fight the vitiated air of the room, take it from underneath, roll it up and push it outdoors. Its fresh caress reached the sick child's feverish face and she shuddered.

"She will catch cold . . ." said Mme. de Fontanin in a low voice. At first he only answered with a happy grin.

At last he said: "Shut it, yes, shut it, that's all right! Now, light all the lights, Mme. de Fontanin! We must have light all around, we must have joy! And in our hearts, too, we need light and plenty of

joy! The Lord God is our Light, the Lord God is our Joy! Of whom shall we be afraid? You have permitted me to arrive before the accursed hour!" he added, raising his hands to heaven. Then he pushed a chair up to the bed: "Sit down, be calm, be very calm, control yourself. Listen to what Christ says to you. I tell you, Christ wants her to be in good health. Let us be with Him. Let us invoke the great Force of God. The Spirit is everything. The flesh is the slave of the spirit. For the last two days the poor darling has not been protected against the negative influence. All these men and women horrify me. They think the worst, they evoke only evil, and they believe that it is the end, with only their own poor meager certitudes to go by!"

The moanings began again. Jenny was moving. Suddenly her head went back and her lips opened as if she were going to draw her last breath. Mme. de Fontanin threw herself upon the bed, covering the little one with her body, shouting in her face:

"I won't have it! . . . I won't have it. . . ."

The pastor went up to her as if he thought her responsible for the crisis:

"Afraid? You have no faith? Face to face with God there is no fear. Fear is purely of the flesh. Put aside your fleshly being; that's not the real being! Saint Mark said: 'Anything you pray for, believe that you have already received it and you will have it.' Let her go. Pray!" Mme. de Fontanin knelt down. "Pray!" he commanded her severely. "Pray for yourself first, weak soul that you are! May God give you back confidence and peace! If you have perfect confidence, your child will be saved! Invoke God's spirit. I unite my heart with yours. Let us pray!"

He meditated for a moment and then began to pray. It was only a murmur at first. He was standing, his feet close together, his arms crossed, his head lifted towards heaven, his eyes shut. His long locks hanging around his forehead gave him a halo of black flames. Little by little the words became distinguishable and the groans of the child punctuated his invocation like an organ accompaniment.

"O Lord God! Thou Giver of Life! Thou art everywhere, even in the smallest atom which composes Thy creatures. I call upon Thee from the depths of my soul. Bring peace to this home in trouble. Put aside from this bed everything which is not a thought of life. Evil exists because of our weakness. O Lord God, expel the Negative from us! Thou alone art infinite Wisdom and what thou dost with us is according to Thy Law. That is why this woman here confides her child on the threshold of death, to Thee. She gives her into Thy keeping, O Lord; she leaves her, she abandons her to Thee and if Thou must take the child away from her mother, her mother is willing to have it so. She is willing!"

"Please, hush! No, no, James," muttered Mme. de Fontanin.

Without advancing a step, Gregory laid an iron hand on her shoulder:

"Woman of little faith, can it be you? You who have so many times been filled by the Holy Spirit?"

"James, I have suffered too much in the last three days, I can't stand more!"

"I look at her," he said, moving away from her, "it is no longer she. I cannot recognize her, for she has let Evil enter into her thoughts, into the very Temple of God!

"Pray, poor woman, pray!"

The child's body moved convulsively under the sheets. Her eyes opened again and looked unseeingly at all the lights in the room. Gregory paid no attention to her, but Mme. de Fontanin clasped the child in her arms and tried to keep her quiet.

"Supreme Strength!" the pastor was chanting. "Eternal Truth! Thou hast said: If anyone would follow me, let him renounce himself. Well, if this mother must be wounded through her child, she accepts, she is willing!"

"No, James, no. . . ."

The pastor bent over.

"Renounce! Renunciation has the same effect as yeast. Just as the yeast raises up the flour, renunciation works on evil and raises up God!" Then, straightening up: "If thou wishest it, O Lord God, take her daughter, take her, she renounces her, she abandons her! And if thou needest her son . . ."

"No, . . . no. . . ."

" . . . and if thou needest her son also, let him be taken too, let him not appear again in his mother's house!"

"Daniel! . . . No!"

"Lord, she gives her son into Thy keeping of her own free will! If her husband must also be taken from her, let it be so!"

"Not Jérôme," she moaned, walking on her knees.

"Let him also be taken!" went on the pastor with a growing exaltation. "Let him be taken, without dispute, through Thy Will, Source of Light!

"Source of all Good! Holy Spirit!"

He stopped for a while, then without looking at her:

"Pray!"

"Have pity, James, I can't do it. . . ."

After some minutes: "Have you made the sacrifice, the complete sacrifice?" She did not answer and fell down beside the bed.

Nearly an hour went by. The sick child was quiet. Her head alone, red and swollen, moved slowly from right to left, left to right, her breathing was labored and her eyes, continually open now, had a glassy look.

Suddenly, although Mme. de Fontanin had not moved, the pastor shuddered as if he had been called by name, and came to kneel beside her. She raised her hand and her features were more peaceful. She looked for a long time at the small face lying on the pillow, opened her arms and said:

"Thy will be done, not mine, O Lord!"

Gregory did not move. He had never doubted for a moment that this word would be said in its proper time. His eyes were closed and with all his strength he was praying for God's Grace.

The hours slipped by. It sometimes seemed as if the little one were giving up the struggle and as if all that remained to her of life was waning. Sometimes the body was shaken by convulsions and then Gregory took one of Jenny's hands in his, saying with humility:

"We shall reap! We shall reap! but we must pray. Let us pray."

About five o'clock he got up and put back over the child a blanket which had slipped to the floor. Then he opened the window and the cold night air entered the room. Mme. de Fontanin, still on her knees, did not try to prevent him and he went out on to the balcony. The dawn was still in the offing and the sky was a dull gray; the Avenue lay like a trench of shadow,

but in the distance over the Gardens of the Luxembourg, the horizon was brightening; a mist was blowing along the Avenue, enveloping with cotton wool the dark masses of the tree tops. Gregory stiffened his arms to keep from shuddering and his clenched hands clung to the railing. The fresh morning air, accompanied by a light breeze, bathed his moist forehead and his face, tired out by watching and by prayer. Already the roofs looked blue, and the shutters showed clear on the smoke-colored stones of the houses.

The pastor faced towards the East. From the obscure depths of night a great stretch of light was coming up towards him, a rosy light which soon filled the whole sky. Nature was waking and countless happy molecules were scintillating in the morning air. And suddenly a new breath filled his lungs, a superhuman strength seized him, uplifted him, and made him immensely strong. In a minute he was conscious of boundless possibilities, his thoughts could command the universe, he could attempt anything, he could shout to that tree: "Quiver!" and it would quiver, to that child: "Arise!" and she would rise from the dead. He stretched out his arms and suddenly as if in harmony with his gesture, the foliage on the Avenue stirred with life, and from the tree at his feet a flock of birds escaped with cries of delirious joy.

Then he went back to the bed, laid his hand on the hair of the kneeling mother, and said:

"Halleluia, my dear! The perfect cleansing is accomplished!"

He went to Jenny:

"The darkness has disappeared. Give me your hands, sweetheart." And the child, who for the last two days had hardly understood a word, gave him her

hands. "Look at me!" And the feverish eyes which had appeared as if they would never see again looked at him: "He will deliver you from death and the beasts of the earth will be at peace with you. You are well, my little one. No more darkness! Glory to God! Pray!" The child's eyes had an intelligent expression and again she moved her lips, as if she were really trying to pray. "Now, my darling, close your eyes. Slowly. . . . That's right. . . . Sleep, my darling! No more anxiety! You must sleep happily."

Some minutes later, for the first time in fifty hours, Jenny fell into a peaceful sleep. Her head nestled on the pillow, her eyelashes rested upon her cheeks and her breathing came naturally. She was saved.

VI

JACQUES and Daniel had chosen a notebook bound in gray cloth for their correspondence, so that it might go back and forth without attracting any teacher's attention. The first pages were covered with such inscriptions as: "What are the dates of the reign of Robert the Pious?"

"Is it rapsody or rhapsody?"

"How do you translate *eripuit?*"

Others were covered with notes for and corrections of Jacques's poems.

Then came the letters between the two schoolboys.

The first long letter was from Jacques:

"Paris, Lycée Amyot, class 3A, under the suspicious eye of QQ′, nicknamed Pig's Hair, on Monday, the seventeenth day of March, at 3.31.15 P. M.

"Is your state indifference, sensuality or love? I am inclined to believe the third, which is more natural to you than the others.

"As for myself the more I study my feelings, the more I see that Man

IS A BRUTE

and that love only can raise him above that level. My wounded heart tells me so and it does not deceive me. Without you, my darling, I would be only an idiot and a stupid fool. If I live at all, it is thanks to you!

"I shall never forget those moments, alas, too rare, too short, when we belong wholly to each other. You are my only love. I shall never have another, because, if I did, a thousand passionate memories of you would besiege my mind. Good-by; I am burning, my temples are throbbing, my eyes can't see clearly. . . . Nothing shall ever separate us! When, when shall we be free? When shall we be able to live together, to travel together? I should love foreign countries. To gather with you undying and picturesque impressions, and with you to put them into poems while they are still fresh! I don't like waiting. Write to me as soon as possible. I want you to answer me before 4 P. M., if you love me as I love you!!

"My soul embraces yours, as Petronius embraced his divine Eunice!

"Vale et me ama!

"J."

And Daniel had answered on the next page:

"I feel that even if I lived alone in another clime, the unique tie which binds our two souls together would make me aware of everything you were doing. It seems to me that time has no power over us.

"I can't tell you all the pleasure your letter gave me. Are you not indeed my friend and have you not become even more than that? My real better-half? Have I not contributed to the formation of your soul as you have contributed to the formation of mine? Heavens! When writing to you I feel that everything I say is true and strong! I am alive. Everything is alive in me, my body, my mind, my heart, my imagina-

tion, thanks to your affection which I shall never doubt, O my one and only true friend.

"D."

"P. S. I made my mother decide to sell my bike, it was really too much of a crock.

"Tibi.

"D."

Another letter from Jacques:

"O dilectissime!

"How can you be sometimes gay and sometimes sad? Even in my wildest moments of gayety, I am full of bitter memories. Yes, I feel that never again shall I be gay and frivolous. Always before me will wait the specter of an unattainable Ideal!

"Sometimes I understand the ecstasy of those pale nuns with bloodless faces who spend their lives out of touch with this much too real world. Alas! To have wings only to break them against the bars of a prison! I am alone in a hostile universe. My beloved father does not understand me. I am not very old and yet already behind me are only broken plants, dew turned to rain, unsatisfied desire and bitter despair!

"Forgive me, my love, for being so sad just now. I am undergoing a transformation: my brain throbs and my heart also (even more than my brain if that is possible). Let us remain united! Together we shall avoid the dangers and storms of pleasure.

"Everything has withered in my hands, and all that remains is my desire to be yours, yours, my chosen one!

"J."

"P. S. I am finishing this in a great hurry because I must study for my recitation. I don't know a single word of it. Damn!

"My love, if I did not have you, I think I should kill myself.

"J."

Daniel had answered at once:

"Are you suffering, my dear friend?

"Why should you, who are so young, my very dear friend, why should you curse life? What a sacrilege! Your soul is attached to the earth, you say? Work! Hope! Love! Read!

"How can I relieve the torment which weighs down your soul? What remedy shall I prescribe for your discouragement? No, my dear friend, the Ideal is not incompatible with human nature, a wild fancy born only of poets' dreams. The Ideal for me, it is difficult to explain, but for me, it is to mix the great things of this earth with the humbler; it is to do nobly everything that one has to do; it is to develop completely all that the Divine Creator has given us of the divine. Do you understand me? That is the Ideal as it dwells in my heart.

"Well, are you willing to rely on a friend who will be faithful unto death, one who has really lived because he has dreamt a lot and suffered greatly? Have you faith in your friend who desires only your happiness? I must repeat to you that you don't live for those who can't understand you, for the outside world which despises you, poor child, but for *somebody,* myself, who thinks of you always, who feels with you as you do and sympathizes in everything!

"Let the sweetness of our privileged relationship be a sacred balm for your wound. Oh, my dear friend!

"D."

Jacques had scribbled at once on the margin:

"Forgive me! My violent, unstable, mercurial temperament is to blame, dearest. I leap from the deepest despair to the most futile hopes: one moment down in the mud and the next touching the stars. Shall I ever love anything constantly (except you!!) (and my *art!!!*)? Such is my fate. Accept my confession!

"I adore you for your generosity, for your fine sensibilities, for the earnestness you put into your thoughts and into all your actions. I endure the same pangs of tenderness and emotion as you. Let us thank the fates that we have loved each other; that our souls, laid waste through loneliness, have been able to unite in an embrace so indissoluble.

"You must never abandon me!

"Let us remember that we have each other and

"OUR LOVE!

"J."

Two long pages from Daniel in a clear and firm writing:

"Tuesday 7th of April.

"My dear friend,

"I will be fourteen to-morrow. Last year I was saying 'fourteen,' as if it were an unattainable dream. Time passes and withers us, but in reality nothing changes. We are forever ourselves. Nothing is changed, except that I feel old and discouraged.

"Last night when going to bed I took up a volume of Musset. The last time I did that, as soon as I had read the first verse, I shivered and tears began running down my cheeks. Yesterday during some weary hours of insomnia, I tried to feel exalted and could not! I found the sentences well written, full of harmony. . . . Sacrilege! At last the poetical feeling awoke in me with a torrent of delightful tears and I was thrilled at last.

"Oh! I hope my heart won't dry up. I am afraid life will harden my heart and my senses. I am getting old. Already the great ideas of God, Spirit, Love do not make my heart beat as they used to long ago and sometimes doubt gnaws at me. Alas, why should we not live with all our souls, instead of by reasoning? We think too much! I envy the strength of youth which goes into danger unseeing and unthinking. I should love to be able to sacrifice myself with my eyes shut to a sublime Ideal; to an Ideal and sinless Woman, instead of always looking within myself. These aspirations without a definite aim are dreadful! . . . You congratulate me on my earnestness. Really it is my curse and my greatest misfortune. I am not like the bee which sucks the honey from one flower and then goes to another. I am like the black scarab which shuts itself in a rose, lives there till the rose shuts its petals, and smothered in this supreme embrace, dies in the arms of the flower it chooses.

"My affection for you, my dear friend, is as faithful as the scarab's. You are the tender rose which has opened for me on this desolated earth. Bury my black sorrow in the depths of your loving heart!

"D."

"P. S. During the Easter holidays you can write without fear to my home. My mother respects all my letters. (However don't write extraordinary things!)

"I have finished *La Débâcle* of Zola and I can lend it to you. I am still very much moved and thrilled all over. It is beautiful because of its power and profundity. I am going to begin *Werther*. There, my friend, is the book of books! I took also *Elles et Lui* of Gyp, but I mean to read *Werther* first.

"D."

Jacques had sent to him these severe lines:

"For the fourteenth year of my friend:

"There is in the universe a man who by day suffers unendurable torments; who can't sleep at night; who feels in his heart an awful void which pleasures cannot fill; whose head is a whirlwind of passion; who, in the midst of pleasures, among all the happy guests suddenly feels the dark wings of solitude spreading over his heart; there is in the universe a man who hopes nothing, fears nothing, who hates life and who has not the strength to abandon it; he is THE MAN WHO DOES NOT BELIEVE IN GOD!!!

"P. S. Keep this. You'll read it when you are troubled in your heart and when you are crying vainly in the darkness.

"J."

Later on, Daniel asked at the top of a page. "Did you work during the holidays?" and Jacques had answered:

"I have finished a poem in the manner of my *Harmodius and Aristogiton,* a poem which begins rather well:

" 'Ave Cæsar! Voici la Gauloise aux yeux bleus. . . .
Pour toi, la danse aimée de sa patrie perdue!
Comme un lotus des fleuves sous de vol neigeux des cygnes,
Sa taille ploie dans un frisson. . . .
Empereur! . . . Ses lourdes épées étincellent. . . .
Vois! C'est une danse de son pays! . . .'

Etc. . . . etc. . . . it ends thus:

" '—Mais tu Pâlis, Cæsar! Hélas! Trois fois hélas!
A sa gorge a mordue la pointe des épées!
La coupe échappe. . . . Ses yeux sont clos. . . .
La voici toute ensanglantée
La danse nue des soirs baignés de lune!

" 'Devant le grand feu clair qui palpite au bord du lac,
Voici la danse terminée,
De la Guerrière blonde au festin de Cæsar!'

"I call that the *Offrande Pourpre* and I have a dance to go with it. I should like to dedicate it to the divine Loïë Fuller, so that she might dance it at the Olympia. Do you think she would?

"Lately I have irrevocably made up my mind to come back to regular meter and to the rhyme of the great classics. I really believe I had despised them because they are more difficult. I began an ode with

rhymed couplets about the martyr of whom I spoke. Here is the beginning of it:

"'Au R. P. Perboyre, lazariste.
Martyrisé en Chine le 20 nov. 1839
Béatifié en janvier 1889.
"'Salut, ô prêtre saint, dont le touchant martyre,
Fait frissonner d'horreur, le monde épouvanté!
Permets que mes accords te chantent sur ma lyre,
Héros de notre chrétienté.'

"But, since last night, I believe that my true vocation is not to write poems, but stories, and, if I have enough patience, novels. I have a wonderful subject. Listen to this:

"A young girl, the child of a great artist, born in a studio corner. She is an artist herself—that is to say, her genre is rather light, but her ideal lies not in family life, but in the expression of Beauty; she is loved by a sentimental but bourgeois young man who is fascinated by her wild beauty. Soon they hate each other passionately and part, he, for a conventional family life with a little girl from the provinces, and she, maddened by love, to become a loose woman, a prostitute, or to consecrate her genius to God, I don't know which yet. That's my idea. What do you think of it?

"Think, never to do anything artificial; to follow one's nature and when one feels oneself born to create, to consider that the most beautiful and serious of missions, a great duty to accomplish! Yes, to be sincere. *Sincere* always and in everything. That thought pursues me all the time. It seems to me that I have de-

tected a thousand times in myself that falseness of the false artist, the false genius of which Maupassant speaks in *Sur l'Eau*. My heart rises with disgust. My very dear friend, how can I thank God enough for giving you to me? How we shall always need each other to help us to know ourselves and to avoid false illusions about our real genius!

"Be careful. QQ' is giving us a dirty look. He can't understand anyone having noble thoughts and communicating them to a friend while he blunders through his Sallust!

"J."

And then this letter from Jacques, written at top speed and nearly illegible:

"*Amicus amico!*

"My heart is too full, it is overflowing! I'll pour what I can of its foamy waters on this paper.

"Born to suffer, to love, to hope—I hope, I love and I suffer! The story of my life can be told in two lines, Love keeps me alive and I have only one love. YOU!

"Since my earliest years, I have longed for someone in whom I could confide, for someone truly understanding. I once wrote to an imaginary person who was as like me as a brother! Alas, my heart spoke, or rather wrote to my own heart with delight. Then, suddenly, God allowed my ideal to become flesh, incarnate in you, my love! How did it begin? I don't remember. From link to link, I lost myself in a maze of ideas without finding the origin. Can one dream of anything as delightful and sublime as this love? I look for comparisons in vain. Everything pales be-

side our great secret! It is a sun which warms and lights our two lives. But all of this cannot be written. Put into words, it is like the photograph of a flower!

"Enough!

"Perhaps you are in need of help, consolation and hope, and I am not sending you any words of affection, but only the lamentations of a selfish heart. Forgive me, my love. I can't write otherwise. I am going through a crisis and my heart is dryer than the rocky bed of a ravine. To be uncertain about everything and about oneself, is that not the cruellest of all afflictions?

"Scorn me! Don't write to me any more! Love another! I am no longer worthy of the precious gift of yourself!

"Where is the irony of fate leading me? Where?? There is nothing!!!

"Do write to me! If I did not have you any more, I should kill myself!

"Tibi eximo, carissime!

"J."

Abbé Binot had inserted at the end of the gray notebook, a note seized by the teacher the day before their flight.

The writing was Jacques's—an awful scribble done in pencil.

"Shame on those who are cowardly enough to accuse others without proof, shame on them!

"SHAME AND SORROW!

"All this intrigue is the result of an ignoble curiosity. They want to inquire into our friendship and their manner of proceeding is infamous!

"No cowardly compromise! Let us brave the storm! I would rather die!

"Our love is above calumny and threats!

"Let us prove it to them!

"YOURS FOREVER,

"J."

VII

By the time they had arrived in Marseilles on Sunday evening after midnight their exaltation had decreased. Bent almost double, they had slept on the wooden seats in the badly lighted carriage and as they entered the station the noise of the revolving wheels had wakened them suddenly. They descended to the platform, their eyes blinking, silent, afraid, and in very low spirits.

They had to have a bed. Opposite the station under a white light on which one could read the sign "Hotel," an innkeeper was watching for customers. Daniel, who had greater assurance than Jacques, asked for two beds for the night. The man who on principle never trusted anybody, began asking them questions but they had answers ready. At the station in Paris their father had gone after a parcel he had forgotten and had missed the train but would arrive the next day, doubtless by the first train. The innkeeper whistled and looked at the children in a most significant way. At last he opened a register: "Put down your names."

He spoke to Daniel because he seemed to be the older, probably about sixteen—but also because the distinction of his features and his whole personality commanded a certain amount of respect. The lad had taken off his hat on entering the hotel, but not through any shyness. He had a way of taking off his hat and

letting his arm fall which seemed to say: "I am doing this more to be polite than out of consideration for you." His black hair grew beautifully to a point in the middle of an unusually white forehead and his oval face ended in a very firm chin, sensible and stubborn at the same time but with nothing brutal about it. His eyes had met those of the inquisitive innkeeper with neither weakness nor bravado, and on the register he wrote without hesitation: *Georges et Maurice Legrand.*

"The room will be seven francs. Here you always pay in advance. The night train arrives at 5.30 A. M. I'll call you."

They were afraid to say that they were dying of hunger. Their room was furnished with two beds, a chair and a wash basin. Modesty made them ashamed to undress in front of each other and their sleepiness had left them. To put off the painful moment as far as possible, they sat on their beds to do their accounts. Their total fortune came to one hundred and eighty-eight francs, which they divided. Jacques in emptying his pockets had shown Daniel a small Corsican dagger, an occarina, a translation of Dante worth twenty-five centimes and lastly a cake of half melted chocolate, which they shared. Then they did not know what to do. Daniel, to gain time, unlaced his boots and Jacques did the same. A vague embarrassment made their uneasiness worse. At last Daniel took the initiative and put out the candle, saying: "Well, I'll put out the light. . . ." And they went to bed very quickly and silently.

In the morning before five, their door was shaken. They dressed like ghosts with only the gray dawn for

light. The fear of having to talk made them refuse the coffee which the innkeeper had ready. They went to the station refreshment-room, shivering and with empty stomachs.

By noon they had been all over Marseilles, for their courage had come back with freedom and full daylight. Jacques had bought a notebook in which to write down his impressions, and from time to time he would stop as if inspired, to scribble a sentence or two. They bought sausage and bread, and going down to the port, installed themselves on coils of ropes in front of the anchored ships and the swinging sailing vessels.

A sailor made them get up so that he could unwind his cables.

"Where are those boats going?" ventured Jacques.

"That depends. Which one?"

"That big one?"

"To Madagascar."

"Really? Shall we see it start?"

"No, that goes on Thursday. But if you want to see a departure, you must come back here at 5 P. M. That one, the *La Fayette,* goes to Tunis."

This was the information they wanted.

"Tunis," said Daniel, "that's not Algeria."

"No, but it's Africa, at any rate," said Jacques, taking a bite of his bread. Crouching on his heels against a heap of tarpaulins with his red hair, stiff and bushy, planted like grass upon his narrow forehead, with his long head and big ears, his thin neck, his small, badly shaped nose that moved all the while, he looked exactly like a squirrel nibbling nuts.

Daniel stopped eating.

"I say, let us write *to them* from here. . . ."

The smaller boy's expression made him stop at once.

"Are you crazy?" he shouted with his mouth full, "do you want us arrested as soon as we arrive?"

He looked angrily at his friend. On his ugly face, made still uglier by a lot of freckles, his eyes, steel-blue, small, deep-set and obstinate had an extraordinary life of their own. Their expression changed so rapidly that it was almost inscrutable, sometimes serious, then mischievous; sometimes full of tears, but oftener dry, full of enthusiasm and looking quite incapable of softness.

Daniel meant to answer but remained silent. His conciliatory nature was defenseless before Jacques's irritation and he smiled as if to excuse himself. He had a peculiar smile. His small mouth with thick lips went up suddenly at the left corner, showing his teeth, and this gay twist gave to his otherwise serious face a charming irregularity.

Why did not this serious adolescent revolt against Jacques's influence? Did not his education, and the freedom which he enjoyed, confer upon him all the rights of the eldest? And in the lycée where they first met, Daniel had been a star pupil and Jacques a dunce. Daniel's clear mind kept always in advance of what was expected of him. Jacques, on the contrary, studied badly, or rather did not study at all. Not that he was dull, certainly not. But unfortunately his bent was not for studies. A demon within him was always suggesting mischief, he had never been able to resist temptation and he appeared irresponsible, forever occupied in satisfying the desires of that demon. The strange thing was that, although he stood always at the bottom of his classes, his fellow pupils and even his teachers, could not help taking an interest in him. Among those children whose personalities remained quiescent under

custom and discipline and those conscientious masters whose natural impulses remain hidden, this good-for-nothing scamp—with his ugly face, with his outbursts of frankness and willfulness, who appeared to live in a fantastic universe created by himself alone, who never hesitated to engage in the most unexpected adventures fearlessly—this unruly child, though he frightened people, nevertheless commanded an unconscious respect. Daniel had been one of the first to fall under the sway of his temperament, rougher than his own but so rich that it never ceased to astonish and instruct him. Daniel himself had something of Jacques's ardor. He also was fond of freedom and revolt. For Jacques, a day-boarder in a Catholic school, born of a family where the practices of religion were scrupulously observed, the friendship was first of all an escape from the barriers erected all around him. Through the attention of this Protestant boy, he could sense a world quite different from his own. But, in a few weeks, with firelike rapidity, their comradeship had become an exclusive passion, in which each of them had at last found a cure for the spiritual isolation from which each had unknowingly suffered. Theirs was a chaste love, a mystical love, where their youth met in the same flight towards the future; they shared all the contradictory and excessive feelings which tormented their fourteen-year-old souls, from the passion for silkworms and for ciphers to the innermost secret scruples of their consciences, and the intoxicating joy of living which each new day brought to them.

Daniel's quiet smile had calmed Jacques, who started eating his bread again. The lower part of his face was rather vulgar—the Thibault jaw—a very wide mouth with broken lips, an ugly mouth, but full of ex-

pression, authority and sensuality. He raised his head:

"You'll find out I'm right," he asserted. "Life is easy in Tunis! They give employment in the rice fields to anyone who comes. You can eat betel, it's delicious, you're paid at once and fed just as you like with dates, tangerines, guavas. . . ."

"We shall write to them from there," said Daniel.

"Maybe," corrected Jacques, shaking his red head. "When we are settled; then they'll be convinced that we can get along without them." They were silent. Daniel had stopped eating and sat contemplating the big black hulks in front of him, the seething mass of dock hands on the sun-swept pavement, and the splendor of the horizon through the maze of the masts. With the help of this spectacle, he fought off the thought of his mother.

The thing for them to do was to embark, that evening, on the *La Fayette*. A waiter in a café told them where to find the office of the Messageries. The prices were posted. Daniel went to the ticket office.

"My father wants me to get two passages third class to Tunis."

"Your father?" said the old man, going on with his work. Only the top of his forehead could be seen above a heap of papers. He wrote for a long while. The children were on the brink of despair.

"Well," he said, at last, without raising his head, "tell him to come here himself with his identification papers. Do you understand?"

They felt that the people in the office were looking at them, and they slipped out without answering. Jacques angrily buried his hands deep in his pockets. He imagined many different means of escape: they could sign as cabin boys; or supply themselves with

food and hide in packing cases on board the ship or else hire a fishing smack and go slowly along the coast to Gibraltar and then to Morocco, stopping at different ports in the evening to play the occarina and to hold out their hats for money outside the cafés.

Daniel was thinking, for his conscience was troubling him. Several times since they had run away he had heard its disapproving voice and he could not ignore it any longer. He must grapple with it.

"What if we were to remain well hidden in Marseilles?"

"They would be on our track inside of two days," answered Jacques, shrugging his shoulders.

"I am sure that they are already searching for us everywhere."

Daniel could see his mother, very worried, asking Jenny a lot of questions; he could see her going to M. Quillard to ask him what had become of her son.

"Listen," he said. He was breathing hard, and seeing a bench, they sat down on it. "Now is the time to think," he went on courageously; "maybe after they have searched in vain for us for two days they will be sufficiently punished."

Jacques only tightened his fists.

"No, no and no!" he shouted. "Have you forgotten everything already?" His nervous body became so tense that he was no longer sitting on the bench but leaning against it as one leans against a tree. His eyes shone with vindictiveness, against the school, the Abbé, the lycée, the principal, his father, society, injustice.

"They will never believe us!" he shouted. His voice became hoarse: "They have stolen our gray notebook. They don't understand, they can't understand. If you had only seen the Abbé when he tried to make me tell

all about it! His Jesuitic look! Because you are a Protestant he thinks you are capable of anything!" And full of shame, he avoided Daniel's eyes. Daniel lowered his. He felt an unbearable sorrow at the thought that his mother might be troubled by the abominable suspicion. He muttered:

"Do you think they will tell my mother . . . ?"

But Jacques was not listening.

"No, no and no!" he went on. "You know what we have agreed upon? Nothing is changed. Good-by! We've had enough persecutions! When we have shown them by our actions what we are and that we do not need them, you'll see how they'll respect us! There is only one solution: to expatriate ourselves, to earn our living without their help! And then, yes, then, we can write to them from where we are and lay down our own conditions. We can declare to them that we want to remain friends, but that we must be free, because we are going to stay together till death parts us." He stopped and went on very calmly, "or else as I have told you, I'll kill myself."

Daniel looked at him, frightened. The small pale face covered with freckles was strong and there was on it no trace of any bravado.

"I swear to you that I have firmly decided not to let myself be caught. I'll show them! If I'm caught, I'll——" he said, showing under his waistcoat the handle of the Corsican dagger which he had taken Sunday morning from his brother's room. "Or rather this . . ." he went on, taking out of his pocket a small vial done up in paper. "If you refuse to embark with me it would not take long: hup! . . ." He made the gesture of swallowing the contents of the vial. ". . . and I should fall down dead."

"What is it?" stammered Daniel.

"Iodine," said Jacques, looking straight at him.

Daniel begged him:

"Give it to me, Thibault. . . ."

In spite of his fear, he was full of affection and admiration. Now that he was under the spell of Jacques's remarkable personality once again he regained his enthusiasm for their adventure. Jacques put the vial back into his pocket.

"Let us walk on," he said with a darkened look. "Sitting down is not good for thinking."

At four o'clock they were back on the quay. There was a great stir around the *La Fayette*. A broken line of dock-hands passed up and down on the gangway carrying packing cases on their shoulders like ants with their eggs. The two children, Jacques leading, followed them. On the freshly washed deck the sailors were working a winch above an open hole, lowering luggage into the hold. A square-built man with a straight nose, horseshoe-like beard, very dark hair, and pink smooth skin, was directing the activities. He wore a blue coat with a gold stripe on his sleeve.

At the last minute Jacques let Daniel go first.

"Excuse me," said Daniel, taking off his hat slowly, "are you the captain?"

The other laughed:

"Why?"

"I am with my brother, Sir, and we want to ask you . . ." Even before he had finished, Daniel felt they had done wrong by asking and that they were lost . . . "if we could go with you . . . to Tunis. . . ."

"All alone?" asked the man, half-shutting his eyes.

As he said this, his glance, alert and questioning, said more than his words.

Daniel could do nothing but repeat the lies they had decided upon.

"We came to Marseilles to find our father, but he has been offered a job in Tunis in the rice fields and . . . he has written to us to ask us to join him. But we have enough to pay for the journey," he added of his own accord; he had hardly done so, however, when he understood this offer was no less stupid than the rest of his story.

"All right. But where are you living here?"

"Nowhere, we just came from the station."

"You know no one in Marseilles?"

"No."

"And you want to get on board to-night?"

Daniel was on the point of answering no and of going away, but he muttered:

"Yes, sir."

"Well, my little pigeons," laughed the man, "you are jolly lucky it was not the old man you talked to for he doesn't like a joke and he would have sent you to the police to see what it's all about. . . . And, after all, with such jokers, it is the only thing to do," he shouted, suddenly catching Daniel by the sleeve. "Hey, Charlot, hold the little one, I'll——"

Jacques had seen the gesture and jumped wildly over the cases, avoiding with a leap Charlot's outstretched arm and in two or three bounds he had reached the gangway; he slipped like a monkey among the carriers, jumped on to the dock and flew at top speed to the left. But he thought of Daniel and turned back. Daniel was escaping too. Jacques saw him, in his turn, dodging through the ants, going down ladders, jumping on to

the quay and turning to the right, while the man they had thought was the captain, looking down from the quarter-deck, laughed as he saw them running away. Then Jacques took to his heels again. They would find each other later. For the moment, the best thing was to lose himself in the crowd; to get as far away as possible from the docks!

A quarter of an hour afterwards, out of breath, alone in the deserted suburban street, he stopped. At first he had a moment of wicked joy imagining that Daniel had been caught. Well, after all the better, it was his fault if their plan had miscarried. He hated him and was on the point of setting out for the country and escaping alone, without worrying any more about Daniel. He bought some cigarettes and began smoking. At length, after a roundabout way through a new part of the town he came back towards the port. The *La Fayette* was still at anchor. He could see from afar the three decks full of people standing close together. The vessel was getting ready to sail. He ground his teeth and turned back.

Then he went in search of Daniel, for he needed someone upon whom to vent his anger. He followed several streets and reached the Cannebière, mixed in the crowd for a while, and then went back. The oppressive humidity which hung over all the town forecast a storm. Jacques was covered with perspiration. How could he find Daniel with so many people about? His desire to see his comrade increased as he despaired of ever finding him. His lips were parched and burning from fever and he was no longer afraid of people noticing him. Without worrying about the far-away rumbling of thunder he began running hither and thither until his eyes ached from the search. Then the

aspect of the town changed quickly; the light appeared to come from the pavement, the houses stood out clearly against a deep violet sky and as the storm approached big drops of rain began to spot the pavement. As he was passing the entrance of a church a thunder clap quite near startled him and he ran in quickly.

As his steps sounded under the arches, a well-known smell rose to his nostrils and he felt better and more secure. He was not alone now for the presence of God surrounded him and sheltered him. At the same time a new fear seized him. Since leaving home he had given no thought to God; and suddenly he felt the invisible eye upon him, the eye which sees through our most secret intentions. He felt himself a great sinner whose presence profaned the holy ground and whom God would punish from heaven. The rain pattered on the roofs, violent lightning illuminated the windows in the nave, the thunder rumbled and rolled in the darkness, echoing around the child as if looking for a culprit. Kneeling upon a prie-Dieu, Jacques made himself as small as he could, bent his head, and quickly said several Paters and Aves. . . .

At last the rumblings became less and less noticeable and steadier, and a light came through the windows. The storm was passing and all immediate danger had disappeared. Jacques felt as if he had been cheating and had not been caught. He sat down, still feeling guilty, but his pride at having escaped from justice, though infinitesimal, was sweet. Evening was falling. What was he waiting there for? At peace with the world and still numb, he watched the flickering light in the sanctuary, feeling weary and ineffectual, as if he were not in church at all. When a sexton came to close the doors, he ran away like a thief without a genu-

flexion or even a short prayer and he knew that he had now received God's forgiveness.

Outside a fresh wind was drying the pavements. Very few people were walking about. Where was Daniel? Jacques was afraid something had happened to him; his tears blinded him and he tried to repress them as he hastened on. If he had suddenly seen Daniel crossing the road to come to him, he would have fainted from thankfulness.

The clock in the belfry of the Accoules struck eight. Windows were lighting up. He felt hungry, bought some bread, and kept on walking straight ahead, dragging his feet in despair and unable to look any longer at the passersby.

Two hours later, dead tired, he saw a bench under the trees at the end of a lonely avenue. He sat down and the plane trees shook water from their branches over him and then a rough hand touched him on the shoulder. Had he been asleep? It was a policeman! He thought he was going to die and his legs gave way under him.

"Go home quickly!"

Jacques slunk away. He stopped thinking of Daniel, he could not think of anything. His feet were sore and he avoided the policeman. He went back towards the port. Midnight. The wind had fallen. Two by two, colored lights were dancing upon the water. The quay was deserted. He nearly fell over the legs of a snoring beggar who lay ensconced between two bales; an irresistible impulse to lie down and sleep seized him and overcame his fear. He went a few steps further, raised the corner of a big tarpaulin, stumbled over cases which smelt of damp wood, flung himself down and fell asleep.

Meanwhile Daniel also had been searching for Jacques. He had hung around the station and the hotel where they had slept and near the office of the Messageries, but all in vain. He went down again to the docks. The *La Fayette* was no longer anchored there and the port seemed silent, for the storm had forced the idlers to go home.

He returned, with bent head, to the town, the rain pelting down upon his shoulders. He bought some food for Jacques and himself, and sat down outside the café where they had stopped in the morning. A real downpour had begun. All the window-awnings were raised, and waiters with napkins over their heads were pulling down the awnings outside the café. The tramways moved without ringing their usual signal, shooting into the darkened sky the sparks from their antennæ, the water splashing on each side of the tracks as if pushed by a plow. Daniel's head ached and his feet were soaking. He wondered what could be happening to Jacques. He suffered less from having lost him than from imagining the fears and the distress of the small boy. He made himself believe that he would find him at the corner of the baker's shop, and already he was on the lookout for him; visualized beforehand the boy with his wet clothes, feet dragging through puddles, with his pale face, and his eyes roaming desperately. Twenty times he was on the point of shouting, but each time the boy he had seen was unknown, one of many who kept entering the bakershop, and coming out with loaves under their coats.

Two hours passed. The rain ceased; night came, and still Daniel was afraid to go away. He imagined that as soon as he left the spot Jacques would appear.

But at length he took the road back to the station. The white globe above the door of the hotel where they had stayed the night before was lit, but the surrounding neighborhood was in darkness. Would they know each other if they met in that obscurity? A voice shouted: "Mother!" He saw a boy of his own age cross the street and join a lady who kissed him. They moved past him. The lady opened her umbrella to protect herself from the water falling from the roofs and her son gave her his arm; they were talking as they disappeared into the night. A locomotive whistled. Daniel had not the strength to restrain his grief.

How wrong he had been to follow Jacques. He had known it ever since they had met at the Luxembourg and decided to engage in this mad escapade. All along he had been unable to get rid of the certainty that if he had explained everything to his mother, instead of running away, far from reproaching him, she would have protected him against everybody and nothing would have happened to him. He could not understand why he had yielded and he went back over the events of that Sunday morning.

He was in the hall of their apartment. Jenny had heard him come in, and ran to meet him. There, on a tray, lay a yellow envelope, bearing the lycée's official stamp. This would be the notice of his expulsion; he hid it under the table cover. Jenny guessed that something was wrong and looked at him searchingly without saying a word. But when she followed him into his bedroom, and saw him take the pocket-book in which he kept his savings, she threw herself upon him and held him in her arms, kissing him, smothering him. "What is the matter? What are you going to do?" He told her that he was going away because he had

been wrongly accused in a lycée scandal; all the professors were against him and he would have to disappear for a few days. She asked: "Alone?"—"No, with a comrade."—"Who?" "Thibault." "Take me with you!" He took her upon his knees as he used to do when she was small and answered softly: "What about mother?" She wanted to cry and he consoled her: "Don't be afraid, and don't believe anything they tell you. I shall write in a few days and I will come back, but swear to me that you will never tell mother or anybody else that I came, that you saw me, and that you know I am going away. . . ." She nodded, and he wanted to kiss her, but she ran away to her room with a hoarse sob, a cry of despair which he could still hear. . . .

He walked faster. As he had been paying no attention to where he was going, he soon found himself a good distance from Marseilles, in the suburbs. The pavement was sticky, the street lamps far apart. In the darkness, on either side were gaps, which he guessed to be courtyards, doorways or smelly alleys. Children howled in the tenements. A phonograph squeaked in a cheap barroom. He turned back and walked for a long time in the opposite direction. At length he saw the light of a railway signal and knew the station was near. He felt dead tired. The luminous face of the station clock showed the hour one A. M. The long night lay ahead. What should he do? He looked for a corner where he might rest awhile, saw a gas jet hissing at the entrance of a deserted blind alley, and crossing the lighted space he crouched down in the shadows. The wall of a factory rose upon his left and he leaned against it and shut his eyes.

A woman's voice woke him with a start.

"Where do you live? You are not going to spend the night here, I hope!"

She was pulling him toward the light. He could think of nothing to say.

"You have quarreled with your father, I'll bet! You are afraid to go home?"

Her voice was gentle and he confirmed the lie, by taking off his hat and answering politely:

"Yes, Madame."

She laughed.

"Yes, Madame! You know you must go back, quarrel or no quarrel. I've been through it myself. You'll have to go back sooner or later, so why wait? The longer you wait, the harder it will be," and as he was silent: "Are you afraid of a beating?" she asked, lowering her voice to a tone full of interest and familiarity as if she were his accomplice.

He did not answer.

"You are a funny bird!" she said. "So stubborn that you'd spend the night here! Well, come along to my place. I live by myself. I'll put a mattress on the floor. I can't leave a child in the street."

She didn't look like a thief, and he was glad to have company. He wanted to thank her but instead followed her silently.

Soon she stopped in front of a small door and rang, but it was some time before the door was opened. The passage smelt like a laundry. He stumbled against the staircase.

"I am used to it," she said, "give me your hand."

Her hand was gloved and warm. He followed her, glad to be indoors once more. They went up two or three flights and then she took out her key, opened a door and lit a lamp. He saw an untidy room with the

bed still unmade. He remained standing, his eyes blinking in the light, tired out and almost asleep. Without even taking off her hat, she took a mattress from the bed and pulled it into the other room. She turned around and laughed:

"You are dead with sleep. . . . Well, take off your shoes, at least!" He obeyed her listlessly. The idea obsessed him that he must go back to the station's lunch-room next morning, at five o'clock, in the hope that it would occur to Jacques to wait for him there. He murmured:

"You'll wake me early. . . ."

"Of course," she said, laughing.

He felt her helping him take off his tie and undress. He fell upon the mattress and sank into unconsciousness.

It was daylight when Daniel opened his eyes. He thought himself in his own bedroom in Paris, but he wondered at the color of the light filtering through the curtains. He heard someone singing and then he remembered.

The door of the next room was open and a little girl was bending over a basin and washing her face with a great splashing of water. She turned around, saw him leaning on his elbow and laughed:

"So you are awake at last? . . ."

Could it be the lady he had met the evening before? In her chemise and short petticoat, her arms and legs bare, she looked like a child. He had not noticed that her hair was cut like a boy's, and brushed away from her forehead.

Suddenly he was appalled as he thought of Jacques.

"My goodness!" he said, "and I wanted to be at the station lunch-room early! . . ."

But the warmth of the blankets she had wrapped around him while he slept made him lazy and he was also afraid to get up as long as the door remained open. Just then she entered, holding a smoking cup of coffee and a chunk of buttered bread.

"Here, swallow this and then go! I don't want your father to blame me!"

He was embarrassed to be seen like that, collarless and in his shirt sleeves. It disturbed him to see her near him with her neck and her shoulders exposed. She bent over him and he took the cup without looking up and began eating to hide his confusion. She went to and fro from one room to the other, dragging her heelless slippers and humming. He did not raise his eyes from his cup, but when she passed near him he could not help seeing, on a level with his eyes, her slim bare legs with blue veins, and her reddened heels which stuck out of the slippers. The bread was choking him. At the beginning of this day full of uncertainty he was without any courage and he remembered that, at home, his chair at the breakfast table would be empty.

The sun suddenly filled the room. The young woman had opened the shutters and her fresh voice burst out into the morning like the song of a bird:

"Ah, si l'amour prenait racine
J'en planterais dans mon-on jardin! . . ."

It was too much for him, this sunshine and her happy, carefree attitude just when he was grappling with his despair. Tears came to his eyes.

"Go on, hurry up!" she said gayly, taking his empty cup.

Then she saw that he was crying.

"Are you unhappy?" she said.

Her voice was like the voice of an older sister and he was unable to repress a sob. She sat on the edge of the mattress, put her arm around his neck, and in a motherly way—the last argument of all women—she put his head against her bosom. He was afraid to move. He felt her breathing upon his face and the warmth of her breasts through her chemise. He could not breathe.

"Oh! You stupid!" she said, drawing back, hiding her bosom with her bare arm. "Does the sight upset you? Well, really, at his age, he is already full of vice! How old are you?"

Without thinking, he lied as he had been doing for the last two days.

"I am sixteen," he stammered.

Surprised, she repeated:

"Sixteen?"

She had taken his hand and was looking at it absent-mindedly, then she pulled up his sleeve and looked at his forearm.

"His skin is as white as a girl's," she said, smiling to herself.

She took the boy's wrist and laid it against her cheek; then she stopped smiling, breathed heavily and let his hand fall.

Before he understood what she was up to she had taken off her petticoat and slipped under the blankets.

Jacques had slept badly under his tarpaulin stiffened by the rain. Before dawn he crept out of his hiding-place and started his wanderings over again. "Of course," he thought, "if Daniel is free, he will go to the lunch-room at the station as we did yesterday." He

himself reached it long before five, and did not give up hope of finding Daniel there until after six.

What was he to think? What could he do? He asked where the prison was. His heart torn asunder, he hardly dared look at the closed gate:

MARSEILLES PRISON

Maybe it was there that Daniel . . . He went round the unending wall, and back a great distance in order to see the top of the barred windows, and then growing frightened, suddenly ran away.

All morning he walked through the town. The sun beat down fiercely, multicolored clothes drying at all the windows decorated the crowded streets; upon the doorsteps, women were talking and laughing as loudly as if they were quarreling with each other. From time to time the sight of the streets, freedom, the sense of adventure gave him a moment of exhilaration, but the thought of Daniel kept returning to him. He kept his hand on the phial of iodine in his pocket for he had decided that if he did not find Daniel before evening, he would kill himself. He took an oath to do so, raising his voice a little to make it more binding; but really doubted his courage to do anything of the kind.

It was only about eleven o'clock when he found Daniel. For the hundredth time he was going by the café, where they had inquired their way to the office of the Messageries, and—— There he was, at last!

Jacques ran among the tables and chairs while Daniel, more master of himself, had risen:

"Hush. . . ."

People were looking at them. They shook hands. Daniel paid his bill and they went out, turning into the first street they came to. Then Jacques took hold of

his friend's arm, clutched him, embraced him and suddenly burst out sobbing, his forehead on Daniel's shoulder. Daniel did not cry and kept on walking, very pale, looking straight ahead, pressing Jacques's small hand against his side. His upper lip, drawn away from his teeth, was trembling.

Jacques told his story:

"I slept like a thief on the docks under some tarpaulin; where were you?"

Daniel was embarrassed. He had great respect for Jacques and their friendship, and now for the first time he had to hide something from his friend, something of vital importance. His great secret was choking him. He was on the point of letting himself go and of telling everything; but no, he could not do it. He remained silent, stupefied, unable to drive away the recollection of what had taken place.

"Where did you spend the night?" Jacques repeated his question.

Daniel made a vague gesture:

"Upon a bench, down there, but I wandered around a lot."

As soon as they had had their breakfast, they discussed the situation. To remain in Marseilles would be very unwise, for their comings and goings would soon be subject to suspicion.

"Well, what next?" said Daniel, who was thinking of going back home.

"Well," replied Jacques, "I think that we should go to Toulon. It is about twenty or thirty kilometers from here, that way, on the left, by following the coast. We could go there on foot, as though we were taking a walk. There are lots of ships in Toulon and we can surely get on one of them."

While he was speaking, Daniel could not take his eyes from his dear friend's face. They had found each other once more. He looked affectionately at Jacques, at his spotty complexion, his transparent ears, at his blue eyes, brightened now by his vision of Toulon, the boats, the open sea. However great his desire was to share Jacques's magnificent optimism, his good sense made him skeptical; he knew that they would never embark on a boat; but after all he was not altogether certain, and in a way he even hoped to be mistaken, and to have fate give the lie to his common sense.

They bought some food and started on their journey. Two girls smiled at them and Daniel blushed, for their skirts no longer hid from him the mysteries of their bodies. Jacques was whistling, and had noticed nothing. Daniel felt himself isolated by an experience which had unsettled his emotions. Jacques could not be his friend completely any more, for Jacques was only a child.

After passing through the suburbs at last they reached the open road, which followed the irregular coast like a line of rose pastel. A soft, delightful breeze blew towards them, bringing a salty tang to the air. They walked with a military step in the sandy dust, their shoulders burnt by the sun. The proximity of the sea intoxicated them and they left the road to go towards it shouting: *"Thalassa! Thalassa!"* and raising their hands to plunge them into the blue water. . . . But the sea could not be reached so easily. At the point where they started towards it, the coast did not incline towards the water by a slope of fine sand as they had imagined. They were on one side of a deep inlet surrounded by cliffs, and, far below, the water rushed in among the rocks. Just underneath

where they were standing a crag jutted out, like a jetty built by a Cyclops; and the waves, beating against the huge granite beak, were repulsed. Then, broken, powerless, they slipped under and around its polished sides, foaming all the while. The boys held each other by the hand, and bending over together they forgot themselves in admiring the angry waters shining in the sun. In their silent exaltation there was a certain amount of terror.

"Look," said Daniel.

About a hundred yards away a white boat, incredibly luminous, glided over the blueness of the sea. Its hull below the water-line was painted green—the aggressive green of young plants—and every time the oars which sent it forward brought the prow above the water, the shining surface of the green hull flashed like a spark.

"Oh! To be able to describe all that!" said Jacques, fingering the notebook in his pocket. "But you'll see!" he shouted, shrugging his shoulders, "Africa is much more beautiful! Come on!"

And he ran among the rocks towards the road. Daniel followed him, running also, and for an instant his heart was free of all cares and regrets, athirst for adventure.

They came to a point where the highway grew steep and turned at right angles towards a group of houses. As they were reaching this turn a deafening noise stopped them short. A tangle made of horses, wheels and casks, zigzagging from one side of the road to the other bore down upon them at a terrific speed, and when it was about twenty yards away from them crashed against a gate which smashed into a thousand pieces. A heavily loaded dray had been coming down

the steep grade, its brakes had not been applied in time, and as it gained momentum the four Percherons which were pulling it could not hold it back. They ran wildly, getting in each other's way, and they fell in utter confusion at the turning, upsetting upon themselves a mountain of casks from which the wine was escaping. Some frightened men were gesticulating and shouting, running behind this heap of bleeding casks and hoofs panting in the dust. Suddenly to the neighing of the animals, the sound of their bells, the kicking against the iron gate, the clanking of chains, the swearing of the draymen, was added a hoarse cry which dominated all the rest—the death rattle of the leader, a gray horse, trampled by the hoofs of the others. His legs were bent under him and he was being strangled by his harness. A man armed with an axe went into the fray, stumbling, falling down, getting up again, holding the gray horse by one ear and using his axe, but the harness was of iron. The man stood up suddenly, looking like a madman, and threw the axe against the wall, while the rattle became a shrill whistle and a flood of blood spurted from the horse's nostrils.

Then Jacques felt everything grow dim. He tried to steady himself by holding Daniel's sleeve, but his fingers were stiff and his legs so weak that they would not hold him up. He fainted. Some people came, and took him into a little garden, where they made him sit down beside the pump, among the flowers, and bathed his temples with cold water. Daniel was as pale as Jacques.

When they returned to the road the whole village was busy with the wine casks. The horses were up. Of the four three had been wounded. Two with front legs broken were on their knees. The fourth was dead

and lay in the ditch with the spilt wine, his gray head close to the ground, his tongue hanging out of his mouth, his green eyes half-shut, his legs folded under him, as if he had tried, while dying, to make himself as little of a nuisance as possible for the knackers. The immobility of all that hairy flesh, soiled with sand, blood, and wine contrasted with the panting of the three others, who were trembling where they stood abandoned in the middle of the dusty road.

They saw one of the drivers approach the dead horse. Upon his sunburnt face with its hair drenched in sweat was an expression of anger modified by a seriousness which showed to what an extent he felt the catastrophe. Jacques could not keep his eyes off that man. He saw him put into the corner of his mouth the cigarette which he held in his hand, then bend over the gray horse, and hold the swollen tongue, already black with flies. Putting his forefinger into the mouth, and uncovering the yellow teeth, he remained bent over the horse a few moments, feeling the reddened gums. Then he got up, looked around for a friendly face, saw the children, and without even drying his fingers soiled with the horse's saliva, he put back between his lips his cigarette butt.

"He was not quite seven years old!" he said, shrugging his shoulders. He was addressing Jacques: "The best horse of the lot, the best worker! I would give two of my fingers here, these two, to have him back." And turning his head with a bitter smile he spat onto the road.

They started on again, their joy gone.

"A corpse, a real corpse, a dead man. Have you ever seen one?" asked Jacques.

"No."

"Well, old man, it is extraordinary! For a long time I had wanted to see one and one Sunday, when I should have been at catechism, I went there."

"Where?"

"To the Morgue."

"You? By yourself?"

"Yes. You have no idea how white a dead man looks. It is as if he were made of wax or paper-pulp. There were two of them. One had his face all covered with wounds, but the other was exactly as if he were alive. His eyelids were not shut. Just like a live man," he went on, "and yet he was dead, there was no doubt about it, one could see that at a glance, on account of . . . I don't know what. . . . You saw the horse . . . it was the same thing. . . . Well, when we're free," he concluded, "I'll have to take you to the Morgue some Sunday."

Daniel was not listening any more. They had just passed under the balcony of a villa where a child was practicing her scales. Jenny . . . He thought of her delicate face and of the way she looked straight at you, as when she had shouted: "What are you going to do?" and when tears had clouded her big gray eyes.

"Are you sorry that you have no sister?" he said a little later.

"Yes! Especially an older sister, because I almost have a younger one." Daniel looked at him surprised. He explained: "Mademoiselle is bringing up with us a young niece of hers, an orphan. She is ten years old. . . . Gise. . . . Her name is Gisèle, but we call her Gise. . . . She is like a younger sister to me." His eyes suddenly filled with tears. He went on jumping from one thought to another: "You have been brought up differently. First of all, you are a day pupil, you

live like Antoine, you are very nearly free. Of course, you are very reasonable," he said in a melancholy tone.

"And you are not?" said Daniel seriously.

"Oh! I!" went on Jacques, frowning, "I know that I am impossible. I could not be otherwise, you know. I get in such rages sometimes that I don't know what I am doing, I break things, I strike at people, I shout awful things, I am quite capable of jumping out of the window or of killing somebody. I am telling you all this so that you will know the worst about me," he added. It was quite obvious that he enjoyed condemning himself. "I don't know whether it is my fault or not. It seems to me that if I lived with you, I would not be like that, but I can't be sure."

"If you only knew what they are like at home, when I go back in the evenings!" he went on after a moment's silence, looking far away. "Father does not take me seriously. The priests tell him that I am unmanageable at school, to flatter him, to make him think they have a devil of a time bringing up the son of M. Thibault, who is very powerful with the Archbishop, you understand! My father is a very good man, you know," he added with a sudden animation, "a very good man, I assure you. But how can I explain it. . . . He is always thinking about his conferences, his social reforms and his religious speeches. And Mademoiselle also. Every time something bad happens to me, it is God who is punishing me. You understand? After dinner, father shuts himself up in his study and Mademoiselle makes me say my lessons, which I never know, in Gisèle's room, while the little one is being put to bed. They do not even leave me alone in my room. They have taken off the electric switch so that I can't use the light!"

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"What about your brother?" asked Daniel.

"Antoine, yes, he is all right, but you see, he is never there. And then, of course, he has never talked to me about it—but I suppose that he does not care very much either for our home. . . . He was a big boy when mother died; he is nine years older than I am, so that Mademoiselle cannot order him about. While you see, she brought me up!"

Daniel was silent.

"It is not the same for you," repeated Jacques. "They know how to talk to you, you have been brought up in a different way. Just as with books, you can read everything in your home, the library is open to you, while as for me, I am only given big red and gilt books with illustrations, the Jules Verne kind of thing, idiotic stuff! They don't even know I write poetry. They'd be angry if they knew it; they would not understand. Maybe they'd tell about it at the school so that the teachers would watch me even more closely."

They remained silent for a long time. The road led back from the sea through a clump of oak trees.

Suddenly Daniel went nearer to Jacques and touched his arm.

"Listen," he said, and his voice, which was changing, took a full and solemn tone, "I am thinking of the future. Who knows? We might be separated. Well, there is one thing I have wanted to ask you for a long time, as a token, as the eternal seal of our friendship! Promise to dedicate to me your first volume of verse. Without any name, just *'To my friend.'* Will you?"

"I swear it," said Jacques, straightening up, and feeling himself already a man.

When they reached the wood they stopped awhile

under the trees. Above Marseilles the west was glowing.

Jacques's ankles were swollen and he took off his boots and stretched himself on the grass. Daniel looked at him, not thinking of anything, but suddenly he turned away from the small bare feet with their reddened heels.

"Look, a lighthouse," said Jacques, pointing. Daniel shuddered. Far away on the coast an intermittent sparkle lighted the sulphur-colored sky. Daniel did not answer.

The air grew cooler as they resumed their journey. They had expected to sleep outdoors, under a bush, but the night was going to be very cold.

They walked for half an hour without saying a word and arrived at last in front of a newly whitewashed inn, its windows looking out on the sea. The common room, though lighted, was deserted. They were wondering what to do next when a woman, seeing them hesitate, opened the door. She lifted her primitive glass lamp in which the oil shone like topaz. She was old and small with two gold earrings dangling from her ears on her tortoiselike neck.

"Madame," said Daniel, "have you a bedroom with two beds for to-night?" Before she had time to ask them questions he explained: "We are brothers and are going to join our father in Toulon, but we left Marseilles too late to be able to sleep in Toulon to-night. . . ."

"Well, I should say so!" said the good old woman, laughing. Her expression was young and happy, and she moved her hands a great deal while she spoke. "On foot to Toulon? What stories you are telling me! Oh, well, it doesn't matter! A room, all right,

but it costs two francs in advance . . ." and as Daniel was pulling out his pocketbook: "The soup is ready, shall I give you some?" They accepted.

The room was an attic with only one bed and the sheets had been used before. Without any explanation, in perfect accord, they took their shoes off quickly and crawled under the blanket, completely dressed, back to back. It took them a long time to go to sleep. The moon shone straight in on them, through the small window, and the rats ran about in the garret beside them, with a scampering sound. Jacques saw a horrible spider on the whitewashed wall. It disappeared in the shadows but he made up his mind to stay awake all night. Meanwhile Daniel imagined himself sinning in the flesh again. Bathed in sweat, he was afraid to move, panting with curiosity, disgust and pleasure.

The next morning, Jacques being still asleep, Daniel was about to get up to escape his thoughts, when he heard a great noise downstairs in the inn. He had been haunted all night by his adventure, and his first thought was that he was going to be taken to prison because of his debauchery. Then the door, which had no fastening, opened, and he saw the innkeeper with a policeman who struck his forehead against the lintel as he entered and then took off his cap.

"They arrived at nightfall, covered with dust," the old woman explained, laughing all the while and shaking her long earrings. "Look at their boots. They told me an impossible story, that they wanted to go on foot to Toulon and goodness knows what else! And that one, the tall nice-looking one," she said, stretching her arm with its jingling bracelets towards

Daniel, "gave me a hundred franc note to pay the four francs fifty for their room and supper."

The policeman began, with a bored expression, to brush his cap.

"Well, get up," he grumbled, "give me your surnames, your Christian names and the whole story!"

Daniel hesitated. But Jacques had jumped out of bed; with only his trousers and his socks on, he stood like a fighting cock as if he were going to knock the tall easy-going policeman down. He was shouting in his face:

"Maurice Legrand, his name is Georges, he is my brother! Our father is in Toulon. You can't prevent us from going to join him, you know!"

Some hours later, they reëntered Marseilles, jogging along in a cart, guarded by two policemen and accompained by a tramp who had been handcuffed. The heavy gate of the jail opened and shut again noisily after them.

"Come in here," said a policeman to them, opening the door of a cell. "Empty your pockets and give me all you have. You are going to be left together till meal time while we find out if what you say is true."

But long before meal time a police sergeant came for them to take them to the lieutenant's office.

"It is no use denying it. You are caught. Your people have been searching for you since Sunday. You are from Paris; you, the tall one, your name is Fontanin and yours Thibault. To think that you, children of good family, should go tramping along the roads like young criminals!"

Daniel looked truculent, but felt deeply relieved. At last, the whole thing was over. His mother knew that he was alive and she awaited him. He would ask

her forgiveness and her pardon would clear away everything, even the affair of which he had been thinking just now with horror, and which he would never be able to confess to anybody.

Jacques tightened his jaws and when he thought of his iodine and his dagger, he clenched his fists desperately in his empty pockets. A dozen plans for vengeance and flight were running through his mind. Just then the police officer added:

"Your poor parents were in despair."

Jacques looked at him wildly and suddenly his face paled and he burst into tears. He could see his father, Mademoiselle and little Gise. . . . His heart overflowed with love and remorse.

"Go to sleep," the lieutenant went on. "To-morrow the necessary steps will be taken. I am awaiting orders."

VIII

For the last two days Jenny had been sleeping and was still very weak though without fever. Mme. de Fontanin was standing near the window and listening to every noise on the avenue, for Antoine had gone to Marseilles after the two runaways and was bringing them back to-night. Nine o'clock had just struck and she expected them at any moment now.

She started. She was sure she had heard a carriage stop in front of the house.

She hurried to the landing and leaned over the banister. The dog followed her and began barking his greeting. There was Daniel! She recognized him at once by his hat with the drooping brim which hid his face and by the way he carried himself. He was walking ahead followed by Antoine, who held his brother by the hand.

Daniel looked up and saw his mother. The lamp on the landing just above her head made her hair appear quite white and threw a shadow upon her face; but he had seen her features. He lowered his head and went on up, knowing she would come down to meet him. He could hardly lift his feet and while taking off his hat, not daring to look up, scarcely able to breathe, he found himself suddenly in her arms, his head resting upon her bosom. But his heart was so heavy that he hardly felt any joy. He had anticipated this moment

for so long that now he was numb, and when at last he drew away from her, there was not a tear on his downcast face. It was Jacques, leaning against the staircase, who burst out sobbing.

Mme. Fontanin held her son's face between her hands and kissed him. No reproaches, just a long kiss. But the anguish of that endless week made her voice tremble when she asked Antoine:

"Poor children, have they had their dinner?"

Daniel whispered:

"Jenny?"

"She is out of danger, she is in bed, you'll see her, she is waiting for you . . ." And as Daniel broke away from her and rushed into the apartment: "Go slowly, my son, take care, she has been very ill, you know. . . ." Jacques's tears were almost dry and he could not help looking around him with curiosity. So this is Daniel's house; the staircase which he climbs every day when he comes back from school; the hall he goes through, and this lady, with the strange caress in her voice is his mother!

"Well, what about you, Jacques," she asked, "won't you kiss me?"

"Say something!" said Antoine, smiling and pushing him forward.

Mme. de Fontanin opened her arms and Jacques found himself in them, his head resting where Daniel's had just rested. She thoughtfully caressed the small red head with her fingers and turned to the elder brother with the ghost of a smile. Then as she saw that Antoine, who had remained on the landing, looked as if he were in a hurry to be gone, she held out both her hands above the head of the child, who was clinging to her and said with a gesture full of gratitude:

"I shall not detain you, for I am sure your father is waiting for you."

Jenny's door was open.

Daniel was kneeling by the bed and kissing his sister's hands which he had clasped in his. Jenny had been crying. Her uncovered arms and shoulders and her face showed how her illness had weakened her. Her thinness made her eyes all the more expressive, and though they still showed how ill she had been they were hard and willful. She had an enigmatic expression, as if she were already a woman who left behind her youth and serenity.

Mme. de Fontanin approached them, desiring to gather both her children into her arms; but as she did not want Jenny to overexert herself, she made Daniel get up and accompany her to her room.

The room was brightly lighted. In front of the chimney Mme. de Fontanin had prepared the tea table; toast, butter, honey and under a napkin boiled chestnuts were being kept warm just as Daniel liked them. The samovar was hissing and the room felt warm and stuffy; it made Daniel feel a little faint. He refused the plate his mother held out to him. But she looked so disappointed!

"What, my dear boy? You are not going to deprive me of having a good cup of tea with you this evening?"

Daniel looked at her. What had changed her so? And, yet, she was drinking her hot tea slowly as she always did; and her face, turned towards the light, was smiling through the steam rising from her cup. Her face was as he had always seen it though rather more tired than usual; but her smile, her expression! He could not stand so much kindness; he bent his head,

seized a piece of toast and bit into it. She smiled still more. She was happy and did not speak, bestowing her overflow of love upon the dog which she stroked as it hid in the folds of her dress.

He put down his bread, looked at the ground, and grew very pale as he asked:

"What did they tell you at the lycée?"

"I told them it was not true!"

Instantly the wrinkles on Daniel's forehead disappeared as he raised his eyes to meet his mother's gaze, a trustful gaze, but inquiring nevertheless. She wanted her trust to be justified, and Daniel's eyes answered her silent question in the most indubitable manner. Then, radiant, she went to him and said in a very low voice:

"My own, dear boy, why, oh, why! did you not come to me and tell me everything, instead of . . ."

But she did not finish her sentence; the jingling of a bunch of keys could be heard in the anteroom. She turned towards the half-open door. The dog, wagging its tail without barking, went to greet the friendly visitor.

Jérôme appeared.

He was smiling.

He wore no coat and no hat and looked so calm that one could have sworn he had been living there all along —that he had just come out of his own room. He looked at Daniel, then went to his wife and kissed the hand which she allowed him to take. An aroma of verbena and citronella floated about him.

"Dear one, here I am! What happened? I am really very sorry. . . ."

Daniel went up to him joyfully. He had grown to

like his father, although he had shown, when he was very small, an exclusive, jealous affection for his mother; and even now he accepted with an unconscious satisfaction the fact that his father remained absent from much of their intimate life.

"Well, so here you are! What is all this they've been telling me?" asked Jérôme. He held his son by the chin and frowned at him and then kissed him.

Mme. de Fontanin remained standing.

She had promised herself that when he came back she would put him out. Her resentment had not disappeared and her resolution had not weakened, but he had caught her unawares and imposed himself upon her in such a disconcerting manner that she did not know what to do. She could not help looking at him; she did not admit to herself how upsetting she found his presence, how aware she was of the charm of his eyes, his smile and his gestures. He was the only man she could ever love. The thought of money served her as an excuse to explain her present inaction, for she had started using her last resources that same morning, and she could wait no longer. Jérôme knew it and doubtless he was bringing her her monthly allowance.

Daniel, at a loss what to say, turned to his mother and saw on her pure face an inexplicable look—so profound, so revealing, that he turned away with a feeling of shame. In Marseilles he had lost even his purity of mind.

"Dear one, ought I scold him?" said Jérôme with a slow smile which showed his gleaming teeth.

She did not answer him at once, but at last she said in a resentful tone:

"Jenny nearly died."

He left his son and went to her, his face so alarmed that she was almost ready to forgive him everything in order to spare him the suffering she knew he deserved.

"The child is out of danger now," he said, "so don't worry."

She forced herself to smile in order to reassure him quickly and her smile indicated her momentary capitulation. She knew it. Everything conspired against her dignity.

"Go and look at her," she added, seeing that his hands were trembling, "but don't wake her."

Some minutes went by. Mme. de Fontanin had seated herself. Jérôme came back on tiptoe and shut the door carefully. The worry was gone from his face and it was aglow with love. He was smiling and his eyes were twinkling.

"You ought to see her sleeping! She is lying upon her left side, her cheek on her hand." His fingers shaped in the air the graceful form of the sleeping child. "She is thinner, but that's just as well, for she is much prettier that way, don't you think?"

She did not answer. He looked at her hesitatingly, then exclaimed:

"But Thérèse, your hair is quite white!"

She rose and went to the mirror over the mantelpiece. It was true. In two days her hair, which had been streaked with gray, to be sure, but had been still blonde, had become quite white upon her temples and all around her forehead. Daniel understood at last what had made her seem strange and unfamiliar since his return. Mme. de Fontanin looked at herself not knowing what to think, unable to suppress a regret; and in the mirror she saw Jérôme behind her,

smiling at her; and against her will his smile consoled her. He seemed amused as he touched lightly with his finger a colorless strand of loose hair.

"Nothing could suit you better, dear one, nothing could show better—how can I express it?—the youthfulness of your eyes."

"I have spent some dreadful days and nights, Jérôme. Wednesday, after everything possible had been done, there seemed to be no hope. . . . I was all alone! I was so much afraid!"

"Dear Thérèse," he said sympathetically. "I am dreadfully sorry. I could so easily come back! I was in Lyons on the business you know about," he went on with such assurance that she searched her memory for a minute. "I had quite forgotten that you did not know my address. And I went only for twenty-four hours. I even lost the benefit of my return ticket."

Just then he remembered that he had not given her any money for a long time. He could not get any for three weeks, but he counted what he had in his pockets and tried vainly to hide a wry smile which he explained to her at once:

"And all my troubles for nothing! Nothing really worth while has been done. I was hopeful until the last minute, but came back empty-handed. These big bankers in Lyons are so cautious, so wary about business!" And he started telling her about his journey, inventing without difficulty as he went along, with all the gusto of a born story-teller.

Daniel listened, feeling ashamed of his father for the first time in his life. Then, out of a clear sky, without any apparent connection, he thought of the man the young woman in Marseilles had told him about,

her "old man," as she called him, a married man in business who always came to see her in the afternoon, she explained, because he never went out in the evening "without his real wife."

And his mother's face as she listened seemed sphinx-like to him now. They looked at each other. What did the mother see in her son's eyes? Could she look further into Daniel's thoughts than he could himself? She said quickly and as if she were a little displeased:

"Go to bed, my dear, you are all worn out."

He obeyed, but as he bent down to kiss her, he visualized his poor mother abandoned by everybody while Jenny lay dying. Was it his fault? His love for her increased when he thought of all the sorrow he had caused her and he clasped her in his arms and whispered in her ear:

"Please forgive me."

She had been waiting for these words ever since his return, but she was not so happy to hear them now as she would have been if he had spoken sooner. Daniel realized this and blamed his father for the delay. But Mme. de Fontanin blamed her son, for not having spoken when they were alone together.

Partly through mischievousness, partly through his liking for good things, Jérôme had gone up to the tray and was making an inventory with a comical face.

"In whose honor are all the sweets?"

His laugh rang false. He had thrown his head back and this motion brought his eyeballs into the corners of his eyes. He uttered one after the other three "ahs!" in a rather forced tone:

"Ah! Ah! Ah!"

He drew a footstool to the table and had already

grasped the teapot when Mme. de Fontanin stopped him.

"Don't drink that lukewarm tea," she said, relighting the samovar. And, as he started to help her: "let me do it," she said without a smile.

They were alone. In order to watch the samovar she had come nearer and was breathing the acidulous odor of lavender and verbena which emanated from him. He lifted his face to her, half-smiling; and his expression was affectionate and remorseful; he held his slice of bread like a schoolboy, and with his free arm encircled his wife's waist with an ease which showed a vast amount of experience in amorous adventures. Mme. de Fontanin moved back, afraid of weakening. As soon as he had withdrawn his arm, she made the tea and walked away from the table.

She remained sad and dignified though his geniality had caused the bitterest part of her rancor to disappear. Unseen, she was looking at him in the mirror. His amber complexion, his almond-shaped eyes, his figure and even the exotic taste of his clothes gave something Oriental to his appearance. She remembered that when they were engaged she had written in her diary: "My beloved is as beautiful as an Indian prince." Even to-day she regarded him in the same way. Sitting on the edge of the low seat he had stretched his legs towards the fire. Using the tips of his fingers with their polished nails, he was buttering pieces of toast, one after the other, covering them with honey and leaning over the plate, eating the bread with a great relish. When he had finished he drank his tea in one gulp and rose with the suppleness of a dancer and stretched himself in an armchair. He acted as if nothing had happened, as if he were still living there.

He began to pet Puce, who had jumped into his lap. On his small left finger he wore a big sardonyx which he had inherited from his mother, an antique cameo on which Ganymede's milky silhouette stood out against a deep black background. Wearing the ring had made it very thin and each time he moved, it glided from one end of his knuckle to the other. She studied all his posturing.

"Am I allowed to smoke, dear one?" He was delightful and incorrigible. He had an inimitable way of pronouncing the words "dear one," allowing the last word to die on his lips like a kiss. The silver cigarette case shone between his fingers. She recognized the sharp click and the trick he had of tapping his cigarette on the back before putting it under his mustache; and how well she knew also his long blue-veined hands which the lighted match transformed suddenly into two flame-colored transparent shells!

She tried to put the tea table in order composedly. The last week had broken her spirit and she grew aware of this just when she most needed all of her courage. She sat down, unable to think and uncertain of what the Holy Spirit desired her to do. Had God not placed her beside this sinner, who even in his transgressions was susceptible to kindness, so that she might some day help him to find his way back to God? No, her first duty was to preserve her home and her children from contamination. Her thoughts became clearer and it was a great help to find herself stronger than she had thought. During his absence her conscience aided by her prayer had judged him, and its verdict was irrevocable.

Jérôme after looking at her with a dreamily absent expression soon put on an air of intense sincerity. She

was well acquainted with his tricks, his pretenses of seriousness and wisdom. She became afraid; because even if it were true that she could read his changeable face without difficulty, her intuition always reached a breaking point, after her perspicacity was lost in shifting sands and she had often asked herself: "What is he, really, at bottom?"

"Yes, I understand," Jérôme began bluntly but with a melancholy air.

"You judge me severely, Thérèse; I understand you, as a matter of fact, I understand you too well. If I were not the person in question, I should judge myself just as you judge me; I should think the man's a blackguard, a blackguard—let us, at least, have the courage to use the right word. Well, how can I explain everything to you?"

"What is the use, what is the use . . ." interrupted the poor woman, and her face, which could not simulate, was full of supplication.

He leaned back in the armchair and smoked; his crossed legs exposed to the ankle, his foot kept swinging nonchalantly.

"Please don't be afraid. I am not going to have any discussion. The facts condemn me. And yet, Thérèse, there may be other explanations for all the facts than the obvious one." He smiled sadly. He enjoyed reasoning about his faults and using moral arguments, probably satisfying in that way what remained of the Protestant in him. He went on, "Often a bad action does not have bad motives. One appears to be satisfying an animal instinct and in reality, sometimes, even often, one merely gives in to some feeling which is fundamentally good—like pity, for example. Thus one

makes people whom one loves suffer only out of pity for others of an inferior class, whom a little attention would probably save. . . ."

In her imagination she saw the little working girl sobbing on the quay. Other memories came up, Marietta, Noémie. She looked intently at his patent leather shoes on which the reflection of the lamp came and went as he swung his foot back and forth. She recalled that during her early married life he had always had urgent and unexpected business dinners from which he came back in the small hours of the morning, shutting himself in his room to sleep till evening. And she remembered also all the anonymous letters she had read, then torn up, burned up, walked upon, without being able altogether to avoid their poison! She had seen Jérôme seducing her servants and making love to her friends one after another. He had succeeded in creating a void around her. She recalled how she had tried reproaches at first, diplomatic scenes in which she spoke loyally, indulgently, while before her stood a man who was wholly dominated by his whims, obstinate, untrustworthy, who denied the evidence with Puritan indignation, and on top of that, like an undisciplined schoolboy, smilingly swore that he would never do it again.

"So, you see," he was going on: "I behave badly towards you, I . . . Yes, yes! Don't let us be afraid of using the right words, and yet, I love you, Thérèse, with all my soul, I respect you and I pity you; and nothing else, I swear to you, has ever, not once, for one single instant, been comparable to my love for you, the only one deeply-rooted in my being!

"Yes, my life is disgusting, I don't defend it, I am ashamed of it, but really, dear one, believe me, you

are committing an injustice, you who are so passionately fond of justice, if you judge me by my actions only. I . . . I am not really as bad as my faults. I express myself badly, I feel that you do not understand me. All that is a thousand times more complicated, even, than I can explain; and I can only see it myself in flashes. . . ."

He stopped, his head bent, looking far away as if he were overcome by this vain effort to reach for one instant the intimate truth of his life. Then he lifted up his head and Mme. de Fontanin felt upon her face the appraising glance of Jérôme, seemingly possessing the power to catch another's eyes, to look deep into them, to seize them so to speak and prevent them for a moment from looking elsewhere—as the magnet draws, lifts and lets go some piece of iron too heavy for it to hold. Once again their eyes met, lost in each other. "Maybe you are also," she thought, "better than your life."

And yet she shrugged her shoulders.

"You do not believe me," he said.

She tried to appear detached:

"I am ready to believe you but I have already believed you so often. It really does not matter much. Whether you are guilty or not, responsible or irresponsible, Jérôme, you have been false. You do it every day, you will do it again—and I can't go on this way.

"Let us separate permanently."

She had thought a great deal about that for the last four days and she emphasized the words with such firmness that Jérôme saw she was in earnest. She noticed his stupefaction and his sorrow, and went quickly on:

"It is time to think of the children. As long as they were small they did not understand. I was the only one who . . ." but just as she was going to use the word "suffered" her natural modesty prevented her. "The wrong you have done me, Jérôme, does not hurt me only. It enters here with you, it permeates the air of our home, the air that my children breathe. I won't put up with that. See what Daniel did this week. May God forgive him as I have forgiven him for the sorrow he inflicted upon me! He is sorry, he has remained faithful to me at heart," and she looked at him proudly almost challengingly, "but I am sure your example has helped him to do wrong. Would he have gone away so easily without caring about my distress if he did not see you disappearing all the time, to go about . . . your business?"

She got up, went hesitatingly to the fireplace, looked at her white hair and bent a little in her husband's direction, without, however, looking at him: "I have been thinking a lot, lately, Jérôme. I have suffered a great deal this week. I have prayed and I have thought. I don't want to reproach you with anything and to-night I haven't the strength to do it, for I am exhausted. I only want you to look the facts straight in the face, and you'll see that I am right. There is no other solution possible. Life in common . . ." she corrected herself, ". . . . what remains of our life in common, Jérôme, is too much for me." She straightened herself up, laying her hands on the marble of the mantelpiece and, emphasizing each word by a movement of her hands and body, said clearly: "I—don't—want—it—any more."

Jérôme made no reply, but went down on his knees

at her feet and before she was able to break away, laid his cheek on her hip as might a child who wants to obtain his pardon by hook or crook. He stammered:

"Can I separate myself from you? Can I live without my children? I'll blow my brains out first!"

She almost smiled, there was so much childishness in the way he carried his hand to his temple. He had taken hold of Thérèse's wrist which rested upon her skirt, and was covering it with kisses. She disengaged her hand and caressed his forehead with the tips of her fingers, in a remote manner, which seemed motherly, but in reality proved her utter detachment. He misunderstood her caress and raised his head, but a glance at her face made him realize that he was deceiving himself. She had drawn away at once and now was pointing to a clock which stood by her bedside:

"Two o'clock!" she said. "It's dreadfully late: please . . . to-morrow."

He looked at the clock and at the double bed on which lay a single pillow.

It was then that she added:

"It will be difficult for you to find a cab."

He made a vague, astonished gesture for he had no intention of going out again that night. Wasn't he at home? Was not his room always ready for him? How many times had he come back in the dead of night, after remaining away for four, five or six days? And he would appear at breakfast in pajamas, freshly-shaven, laughing loudly and joking to overcome in his children the silent suspicion he could not understand. Mme. de Fontanin knew all this, and read his thoughts, but did not compromise. She opened the door leading to the hall. He went out, rather taken

aback, but looking as if he were a friend saying good-by.

While putting on his overcoat, he remembered she had no money. He would unhesitatingly have given up some of the few banknotes he still had, although he had no means of getting others, but he thought that if he gave her money she might not feel free to insist on his departure, and feared that Thérèse might think he only gave it to her to make her reconsider her decision. Since he did not wish to offend his own sense of propriety, he only said:

"Dear one, there are a lot of other things I want to talk over with you. . . ."

She answered quickly, thinking of her decision to put an end to her life with him and also of the money she expected:

"To-morrow, Jérôme, I'll see you to-morrow, if you'll come. We'll have a talk."

He then decided to go away gallantly, took hold of the tips of her fingers and raised them to his lips. For a second both hesitated but she withdrew her hand and opened the door on the landing.

"Well, dear one, good-by . . . till to-morrow."

She watched him till he reached the foot of the stairs, and saw him turn around, and wave good-night.

The door closed and Mme. de Fontanin found herself alone. She rested her forehead on the doorframe, and the muffled banging of the outer door shook the sleeping house with a vibration which she could feel upon her cheek A light-colored glove lay on the carpet in front of her. Instinctively, she picked it up, put it to her lips and smelt it, trying to detect under its smell of leather and tobacco the more subtile perfume she knew so well. Then she caught a glimpse in the

mirror of what she was doing, threw the glove to the floor, and put out the lights; then freed from herself by the darkness, she felt her way to her children's rooms to listen, for a moment, to their regular breathing.

IX

Antoine and Jacques returned to their cab. The horse did not go very fast and seemed to be playing castanets upon the pavement. The streets were dark. The antiquated conveyance smelled musty. Jacques wept. Fatigue, and the embrace of the lady with the motherly smile, moved him to remorse: what could he say to his father? He felt faint, and betrayed his distress by leaning against his brother's shoulder. Antoine put his arms around him. It was the first time that their shyness had allowed any display of affection between them.

Antoine wanted to speak but he could not rid himself of all his reserve at once. His voice sounded high and forced.

"Well, old man . . . it's all over. What's the use of taking on so . . . ?"

He stopped and held the child against him. But his curiosity was aroused.

"What did you do it for?" he went on more gently. "What happened? Did he influence you?"

"Oh, no, he did not want to run away, I was the one, I, alone."

"Yes, but why?"

No answer. Antoine went on lamely:

"You know, I know what they're like, these school crushes. You can tell me everything. I understand."

"He is my friend, that's all," whispered Jacques, still leaning on his brother's shoulder.

"But," asked Antoine, "what do you do . . . together?"

"We talk. He consoles me."

Antoine did not dare to go any further. "He consoles me. . . ." He felt very sorry for Jacques and was about to say: "Then you are very unhappy, my boy?" when Jacques added very proudly:

"And if you want to know everything, he corrects my poetry."

Antoine answered:

"Well, that's wonderful, I am so pleased. I am very glad to know that you are a poet."

"Really?" said the child.

"Yes, I am very glad. But I knew it. I have already read some of your poems that you left lying about. I did not talk to you about them, of course. We never talk together, I don't know why. There are some which pleased me very much. You are certainly gifted and you'll have to make the best of your gift."

Jacques drew closer to him.

"I love poetry so much," he murmured. "I would give everything for some beautiful verse I love. Fontanin lends me books; you won't tell anybody, will you? He made me read Laprade, Sully-Prudhomme, Lamartine and Victor Hugo, and Musset. . . . Ah, Musset! You know it, don't you?

" 'Pale étoile du soir, messagère lointaine
Dont le front sort brillant des voiles du couchant. . . .'

"And this one:

" 'Voilà longtemps que celle avec qui j'ai dormi,
O Seigneur, a quitté ma couche pour la vôtre,
Et nous sommes encore tout mêlés l'un à l'autre
Elle a demi-vivante et moi mort à demi. . . .'

"And the *Crucifix* of Lamartine, you know it also?

" 'Toi que j'ai recueilli sur sa bouche expirante
Avec son dernier souffle et son dernier adieu. . . .'

"It's beautiful, isn't it, and so fluid! It almost makes me ill, every time I read it. It's so beautiful!" His heart was overflowing. "At home," he went on, "nobody understands anything. I am sure they'd make fun of me if they knew I wrote poetry. You are not like them," and he pressed Antoine's arm against his chest. "I'd hoped so for a long time, only you never said anything and you are not at home very often. Oh, I am so pleased that you know. I feel that I am going to have two friends instead of one!"

"Ave Cæsar, voici la Gauloise aux yeux bleus. . . ."

quoted Antoine, smiling.

Jacques broke away from him.

"You read the notebook!" he shouted.

"Yes, but listen. . . ."

"What about father?" shrieked Jacques in such a heartrending tone that Antoine stammered:

"I don't know. . . . Maybe he dipped into it."

He could not go on. The child had thrown himself down on the cushion and was pounding his head against it.

"It's disgusting! The Abbé is a Jesuit, a nasty

person. I'll tell him so! I'll shout it at him during study hours! I'll spit in his face! They can expel me, I don't give a damn, I shall run away again! I shall kill myself!"

He was stamping his feet. Antoine was afraid to utter a word. Suddenly the child calmed down, stopped shouting, ensconced himself in a corner and dried his eyes. His teeth were chattering. His silence was even more alarming than his anger. Luckily the cab was going down the rue des Saints Pères and they were nearly home.

Jacques got out first and Antoine watched his brother while paying the cabman, fearing that he might try to run away into the night. But the boy seemed very low spirited. His urchin's face, dirty with the journey and worn out with sorrow, was dry, his eyes lowered.

"Please ring," said Antoine.

Jacques neither answered nor moved. Antoine commanded him to enter and he obeyed with docility. He was not even thinking of the concierge's curiosity. He was utterly cowed by the knowledge of his own helplessness, his inability to resist his father's authority, completely crushed by the conventions of his family and of society.

And yet when he saw their landing, when he recognized the chandelier in the hall lighted as it was when his father gave his stag-parties, he felt, in spite of everything, glad to be home, and when Mademoiselle came limping toward him from the back of the hall, a Mademoiselle smaller and more shaky than ever before, he forgot his anger and nearly ran into those black-sleeved arms which were opened for him. She

took hold of him and covered him up with caresses, while her trembling voice sang on the top note:

"What a sin! You heartless boy! Did you want to make us die of sorrow? Good God, what a sin! Have you no heart?" Her motherly eyes were filled with tears.

The door of the study opened wide and his father appeared in the doorway.

He saw Jacques at once and could not help being moved. He stopped, however, and, closing his eyes, seemed to be waiting for the culprit to fall on his knees; just as in Greuze's picture, an engraving of which was in the drawing-room.

But Jacques was afraid. The study also was lighted and M. Thibault still had on his frock coat although it was time for his lounging coat; so many unusual things made the child numb. He broke away from Mademoiselle's caresses, moved backwards, and now remained standing with lowered head, expecting he did not know what, with the suppressed tenderness in his heart making him feel hysterical.

M. Thibault's first words seemed to thrust him out of the family. Jacques's attitude before witnesses had caused all thoughts of indulgence to disappear, and in order to master the insubordinate child, he assumed an air of complete indifference:

"Ah, here you are," he said, talking to Antoine only. "I was beginning to grow anxious. Everything went well in Marseilles?" And when Antoine nodded his head and shook his father's soft hand: "I thank you, my dear Antoine, for having spared me such an ordeal. . . . A very painful ordeal!"

He hesitated a few seconds, still hoping for some

move on the part of the culprit. He looked at the servants and then at the child who continued to gaze at the carpet with a very surly expression. So, decidedly angered, he said:

"We shall see to-morrow what must be done to prevent such scandals in future."

And when Mademoiselle approached Jacques in order to push him into his father's arms—Jacques guessed what she was doing without raising his eyes and hoped she would, knowing it was his last chance of salvation—M. Thibault stretched out his arm and stopped her:

"Leave him alone! Leave him alone! He is a good for nothing and his heart is made of stone! He is not worth the worries we have gone through on his account!" Then speaking to Antoine who was waiting to intervene: "My dear Antoine, will you please look after the scamp for one more night? I promise you that to-morrow I shall relieve you of him."

There was a stir: Antoine went up to his father and Jacques raised his head shyly, but M. Thibault went on in a relentless voice:

"Do you hear, Antoine, take him to his room. This scandal has lasted long enough."

Then, as soon as Antoine with Jacques in front of him, had disappeared into the passage where the servants were leaning against the wall watching as if seeing one on the road to the scaffold, M. Thibault with closed eyes rëentered his study and shut the door after him.

He only went through the room toward the one where he slept. It was furnished with his parents' furniture. He remembered it from his early childhood, when it had belonged to his father. He had

lived in a house close to his factory, near Rouen. When he had inherited it he brought everything to Paris where he went to study law. The mahogany chest of drawers, the Voltaire armchairs, the curtains of blue rep, the bed where first his father and then his mother had died, the chair on which Mme. Thibault herself had worked the tapestry, the Christ that he had put between their crossed hands in turn.

There, alone, able to be himself at last, the fat man hunched his shoulders. The mask of fatigue seemed to leave his face and his features took on an innocent expression which made him look like his portraits as a child. He went to the prie-Dieu and knelt down with abandon. His fat hands joined in an easy familiar way and all his movements were natural and unstudied. He lifted up his expressionless face. Through his eyelashes he looked straight to the crucifix. He offered his disappointment, his new trial to God, and from the bottom of his heart, empty of all anger, he prayed like a father for the lost one. From under the railing of his prie-Dieu he took his beads which lay there beside his prayer book. They had been given to him on his first communion, and after forty years of steady usage rolled, of themselves, between his fingers. He closed his eyes again and lifted his face to Christ. No one ever saw this smile in his daily life nor this unconcerned, happy face of his. The movement of his lips made his chin tremble and the regular intervals at which he shook his head in order to free his neck from his collar made him appear to be swinging a censer at the foot of the Throne of God.

The next day Jacques was alone, sitting on his rumpled bed. He did not know what to do on that Satur-

day morning, which was to him in no sense a holiday and which he was spending in his room. He thought of the lycée, of the history class, of Daniel, and he listened to the unfamiliar and hostile morning noises, the broom on the carpets, the doors that the draughts made creak. He was not downcast, but rather exalted; however, his inaction and the mysterious dread which hung over the house made him unbearably uneasy. He tried to think of some sacrifice he could make which would save him: some heroic and absurd sacrifice which would free him from the overflow of tenderness which choked him. Sometimes his self-pity made him straighten up and enjoy a momentary perverse delight made up of rejected love, hatred and pride.

Somebody turned the handle of the door. It was Gisèle. Her hair had just been washed and her dark locks were hanging down over her shoulders. She wore only her chemise and knickers, and her neck, arms and legs were brown. She looked like a little Algerian, with her gathered knickers, her beautiful and doglike eyes, her red lips and her mop of hair.

"What do you want?" Jacques asked rather roughly.

"I have come to see you," she said, looking at him. For all she was only ten, she had guessed many things during the last fortnight. At last Jacques had come back, but everything was not all right because when her aunt was doing her hair, she had been called by M. Thibault and she had left her with streaming locks, after making her promise to be good.

"Who rang?" he asked.

"The Abbé."

Jacques frowned. She sat down on the bed beside him.

"Poor Jacquot," she murmured.

Her affection was so welcome that he took her upon his knees and kissed her in thankfulness, but he was listening:

"Go away, someone is coming!" he whispered, pushing her into the passage.

He had hardly time to jump from his bed and open a Grammar when he heard Abbé Vécard's voice outside the door:

"Good morning, my dear. Is this the way to Jacquot's room?"

He entered and stopped upon the threshold. Jacques looked at the floor. The Abbé approached him and pinched his ear:

"Well, you are doing well," he said.

But the stubborn look upon the child's face made him change his tactics for he was very diplomatic with Jacques. He felt for that lost lamb a particular predilection, a mixture of curiosity and respect and he was well aware of the unknown forces which were lying dormant in the child.

He sat down and drew the boy toward him:

"Have you at least asked your father's forgiveness?" he went on, although he knew the truth quite well. Jacques was annoyed with him because of this deceit, and made a negative sign. There followed a short period of silence.

"My child," said the priest in a saddened, hesitating voice, "I won't hide from you that all this is very painful for me. Up till now I have always taken your part against your father, in spite of your wrongdoings. I always told him: 'Jacquot's heart is in the right

place, there is hope yet, let us have patience!' But today I don't know what to say and what is worse, I don't know what to think. I had heard things about you that I should never have suspected. We'll talk of that later. I said to myself: 'He will have had time to think, and he will come back to us repentant; and there is no fault which can't be effaced by sincere repentance.' Instead here you are with a hard face, and not the sign of a regret to be got out of you. I pity your poor father. He is very discouraged this time and wonders how far you have strayed and how absolutely heartless you are. And I wonder too."

Jacques clenched his fists in his pockets and pressed his chin hard against his chest, so that no sob would escape him and no muscle on his face betray him. He alone knew how much he was suffering because he had not asked his father's forgiveness; how full of delight his tears would have been if he had been welcomed as Daniel had been! No! And since things were so, he would never let anybody suspect that he was feeling for his father this dumb affection full of resentment against him, resentment which had grown steadily since he had given up hope of forgiveness!

The Abbé was silent. The tranquillity of his countenance made his silence more effective. Then, looking far away, without any preamble, he began in a droning voice:

"A man had two sons and the younger of them having gathered together all that he owned, took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, he came to himself and said: I will arise and go to my father and I will say unto him: Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee and am no

more worthy of being called thy son. And he arose and came to his father, but when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him. But the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

At that moment Jacques's sorrow was stronger than his will, and he burst out crying.

The Abbé's voice became softer:

"I knew that you were not really bad at heart, my child. I said a mass for you this morning. Go like the prodigal son to your father, and he will have compassion and will also say: Let us rejoice, for this my son was lost and is found!"

Then Jacques remembered that the chandelier in the hall had been lighted for his return, that his father had kept on his frock coat; and the idea that he had upset all the preparations for festivities upon his return, made him still more sorry.

"I want to tell you something else," went on the priest, caressing the small red head. "Your father has taken a very grave step . . ." He hesitated, and while choosing his words, he passed his hand again and again over the big ears which first lay flat against Jacques's cheeks and then sprang up. They were burning. Jacques was afraid to move. ". . . a very grave step of which I approve" . . . stressed the Abbé, laying his forefinger upon his lips and seeking the boy's eyes. "He wants to send you away from us for some time."

"Where?" said Jacques in a choking voice.

"He will tell you himself, my child. Whatever you may think at first, you must accept his decision with a

contrite heart, as a measure which is for your own good. Perhaps in the beginning it will seem rather hard for you to find yourself alone for hours, but remember in those moments that for a good Christian there is no solitude, and that God does not abandon those who put their confidence in Him. Now kiss me and go to your father to ask his forgiveness."

A few moments later, Jacques came back to his room, his face swollen with tears, his eyes rolling wildly. He went up to the mirror and looked straight into his eyes ferociously, as if he needed the image of a human being at whom he could hurl his hatred, his rancor. But he heard a step in the passage and as there was no key in the lock, he piled up chairs against the door to make a barricade. Then, going to his table, he wrote hastily some lines in pencil, put the note into an envelope, wrote the address, put on a stamp and rose. He was wild. To whom could he give the letter? He felt surrounded by enemies. He opened the window. The morning was gray, the street deserted. Down there an old lady and a child were passing slowly. Jacques let the letter fall, it turned somersaults in the air several times and finally landed on the pavement. He started away quickly. When he risked putting his head out again, the letter had disappeared, the lady and the child were going away.

Then at the end of his strength, he moaned like a trapped animal. He flung himself on his bed and buried his face in the pillow to smother his sobs, at the same time stretching out his feet until his whole body was tense. He gave way to a spasm of helpless rage and he had just enough consciousness left to want to deprive people of the spectacle of his despair.

In the evening, Daniel received the following note:

"My friend,

"My only Love, beauty and love of my life!

"I am writing this to you as my will.

"They are parting me from you, parting me from everything, they are sending me away to a place—I am afraid to tell you what kind of place it is or where it is! I am ashamed of my father!

"I know I'll never see you again, you, my Only one, you who were the only one who could make me good.

"Good-by, my friend, good-by!

"If they make me too unhappy and too wicked I'll commit suicide, and you'll tell them that I killed myself on their account, and yet I love them!

"But my last thought on the threshold of the next world will be for you, my friend!

"Good-by!"

II

THE PENITENTIARY

I

SINCE that day the year before when Antoine had brought back the two fugitive schoolboys, he had never returned to Mme. de Fontanin's house; yet the maid recognized him at once and although it was nine o'clock in the evening admitted him without question.

Mme. de Fontanin was in her room with her children. She was sitting very erect in front of the fireplace, under a standing lamp, reading a book aloud; Jenny, crouched in an easy chair, was pulling at her pigtail and looking into the fire as she listened; at one side, his legs crossed and a drawing pad upon his knees, Daniel sat putting the finishing touches to a charcoal drawing of his mother. Antoine stopped for a second upon the threshold in the shadow, conscious of the inopportuneness of his visit; but it was too late to retreat.

Mme. de Fontanin's welcome seemed rather cold and she looked somewhat astonished. Leaving the children in her room, she accompanied Antoine to the drawing-room, but as soon as she understood why he had come she went back to get her son.

Daniel, although only fifteen, looked now about seventeen, and the shadow of a mustache accentuated the line of his mouth. Antoine, though a trifle taken aback, looked the youth full in the face with a rather challenging air as much as to say: "I always go straight

to the point without any fuss." As before, an obscure impulse let him exaggerate his apparent frankness, because of the presence of Mme. de Fontanin.

"I have come to see you," he began, "for our meeting yesterday made me thoughtful." Daniel looked surprised. "Yes," went on Antoine, "we exchanged only a few words, for we were both in a hurry, but it seemed to me . . . I don't know how to approach the subject. . . . Because you did not ask me about Jacques, I concluded that you must be writing to each other. Aren't you? I even suspect that he may be writing you things that I don't know and that I ought to know. Just a minute please, let me finish. Jacques left Paris last June and it will soon be April, so he has been away nearly nine months. I have not seen him at all since he went away and he never writes to me. My father sees him often and tells me that he is well and working and that isolation and discipline have produced excellent results already. I hope that he isn't mistaken, or deceived. Since our meeting yesterday I have felt uneasy, imagining that Jacques may be unhappy, and I, not knowing, am powerless to help him. It has been unbearable—so I have come straight to you. I appeal to your affection for him. You won't be betraying any confidences, but he must be writing to you about what is happening to him. You are the only one who can reassure me—or make me interfere."

Daniel listened without moving. His first impulse had been to refuse to speak. He held up his head and looked at Antoine with a firmness which hid his agitation. Then, embarrassed, he turned to his mother. She kept looking at him, wondering what he would do. There was a long pause. Then finally she smiled:

"Tell the truth, my son," she said with a sweeping gesture of her hand. "It's always best to tell the truth."

Then Daniel with the same gesture began to talk. Yes, from time to time he had received some letters from Thibault, but lately they had grown shorter and shorter, less and less explanatory. Daniel knew that his comrade was boarding with a tutor in the provinces, but where? His envelopes all bore the stamps of the postal train, on the Northern Railway. Was he at a crammer's for his B.A.?

Antoine tried not to show his astonishment. How carefully Jacques had hidden the truth from his most intimate friend! Why? Was he ashamed? He felt, no doubt, the same sense of shame that made M. Thibault speak of the reformatory at Crouy to which he had sent his son as a "religious institution on the banks of the Oise." Antoine had a sudden suspicion that perhaps those letters had been dictated to his brother. The poor boy was probably being terrorized. He remembered the campaign conducted by a Socialist newspaper of Beauvais, and the terrible accusations it had made against the work of Social Preservation, the lies disproved by M. Thibault in a successful lawsuit for libel. But . . . ?

Antoine could trust no one but himself.

"Don't you want to show me one of those letters?" he asked; and as he saw Daniel blush, smiled and added as an afterthought: "Only one, to see? It does not matter which. . . ."

Without answering—a questioning glance toward his mother, Daniel rose and left the room.

Alone with Mme. de Fontanin, Antoine experienced

the same feelings as before; shyness, curiosity and attraction. She was gazing straight in front of her, seemingly thinking of nothing, but her presence stirred Antoine and increased his susceptibility to emotion. The air about her seemed charged with electricity. He could sense all about him unmistakably and more or less correctly her disapproval. Though she did not precisely blame Antoine or M. Thibault—as she did not know Jacques's fate—she remembered her one visit to the rue de l'Université and had a distinct impression that often what went on there was far from right. Antoine guessed at her feelings and almost agreed with her. Of course, if anyone had dared to criticize his father's conduct he would have been indignant, but at that moment, though he could not have admitted it, he was against M. Thibault and with Mme. de Fontanin. Even the year before—he had not forgotten it—after first breathing the atmosphere of the Fontanins, the air of his father's house had seemed unendurable for a time.

Daniel came back and held out to Antoine a cheap looking envelope.

"That's the first. And the longest," he said and sat down.

"My dear Fontanin,

"I write to you from my new home. Don't try to write to me for it is absolutely forbidden. Apart from that everything is fine. My teacher is nice, he is very good to me and I am working hard. I have a lot of comrades and they are also very nice. And my father and my brother come to visit me on Sundays. You can see that I am all right. I beg you, dear Daniel, in

the name of our friendship, don't judge my father too severely. You can't understand everything. I know that he is good and he did right in sending me away from Paris where I was wasting my time in the lycée; I am sure of that now and I am happy. I am not sending my address, in order to be sure you won't write to me, because that would have terrible consequences for me.

"I shall write to you again when I can, my dear Daniel.

"JACQUES."

Antoine read this letter twice. If he had not recognized his brother's characteristic writing, he would not have believed that the letter came from him. The address on the envelope was in another handwriting; that of a peasant—hesitating, lax and disorderly. The contents and the style were equally disconcerting to him. Why all those lies? *My comrades!* Jacques was living in a cell in the famous "Special Pavilion" created by M. Thibault in the reformatory of Crouy, for the children of well-to-do parents; and it was always empty. He spoke to no one save the servants who brought him his meals, and accompanied him on his walks, and to the teacher who came from Compiègne two or three times a week to give him lessons. *My father and my brother come to visit me!* M. Thibault went to Crouy once a month in his official capacity to preside at the Board of Directors meeting; and on that day, before leaving, he always saw his son in the visitors' room. And when Antoine had wanted to see his brother during the summer vacation, he had been refused permission by M. Thibault. "For your

brother the best cure is solitude and it has to be continued."

With his elbows resting upon his knees he was turning the paper between his fingers. Now he had indeed lost his peace of mind. He felt so lonely, so despairing, that he was on the point of confiding everything to that enlightened woman whom he had met by a lucky accident. He looked at her. Her hands lay in her lap, and she seemed to be waiting. Her glance was penetrating:

"Can we not help you?" she murmured with a pale smile. The whiteness of her charming fluffy hair made her smiling face appear very youthful.

Yet just as he was about to explain everything to her he hesitated. Daniel was watching him with a keen expression. Antoine dreaded to appear irresolute and to give Mme. de Fontanin so poor an impression of his force of character. But he explained it otherwise to himself: he could not divulge the secret which Jacques had hidden so carefully. Without any more hesitation, afraid of himself, he rose and held out his hand, while consciously masking his thought behind an expression which seemed to say: "Don't ask me any questions. You have my secret. We understand each other. Good-by!"

Outside, he began to walk straight ahead, repeating to himself: "I must be calm and decisive." Five or six years of scientific studies made him reason with an appearance of logic: "Jacques does not complain, so Jacques is not unhappy." But he believed the opposite of this. His remembrance of the press campaign against the reformatory became an obsession and he recalled especially an article entitled *Child Convicts* in which the moral and physical degradation of the

children had been described at length. They were badly nourished, badly housed and brutally punished, at the mercy of brutal keepers. He made a threatening gesture. At all costs, he would get the poor child out of the place! He would play the heroic rôle of rescuer! But how? To warn his father and discuss the thing with him was out of the question. As a matter of fact, Antoine had begun to revolt against his father and against the Institution which he had founded and directed, and this revolt against his father was so new to him, that at first he felt ashamed, though soon rather proud of it.

He recalled what had happened the year before, the day after Jacques's return. M. Thibault had sent for Jacques very early in the morning. Abbé Vécard had just arrived. In his study M. Thibault was shouting: "The scamp! His will must be broken!" at the same time opening his fat hairy hand and shutting it slowly, making the knuckles crack. Then he had said with a satisfied smile: "I think I have found a solution." And after a pause, raising his eyelids at last, he had uttered the word: "Crouy." "Jacques in the reformatory?" Antoine had shouted. The discussion had been warm. "We must break his spirit," M. Thibault repeated, still making his knuckles crack. Abbé Vécard had hesitated. Then M. Thibault had explained the special treatment Jacques would get and which, according to him, would be fatherly and beneficent. And he had concluded in a loud voice, accentuating the pauses: "Sheltered thus from pernicious temptations, delivered from his evil instincts through solitude, becoming fond of work, he will reach his sixteenth year; and I hope that he will be able then to come back to our family

life." The Abbé agreed with him: "Isolation often works marvelous cures," he had insinuated. Antoine, shaken by M. Thibault's arguments and the priest's approval, had ended by believing that they were right. And now he could never forgive himself or his father for their attitude.

He walked quickly, paying no attention to the road. He found himself in front of the Lion de Belfort, turned back and went striding on again, smoking cigarette after cigarette, puffing the smoke out into the evening air. He would act at once. He would go to Crouy and see for himself.

A woman accosted him, and said a few words in a cajoling voice. He made no answer but continued along the Boulevard Saint-Michel. "I'll bring them to justice!" he kept repeating to himself. "I'll unmask the dishonesty of the directors, the cruelty of the jailers! I'll make a scene and bring the boy back with me!"

But his great enthusiasm had evaporated. Just as he was on the point of action, overflowing with benevolent intention, his attention was distracted by a wayward impulse. He crossed the Seine, knowing perfectly well where his caprice was leading him. And why not? He felt too nervous to go home to bed. He breathed deeply, straightened himself up and smiled. "To be strong, to be a man," he thought. But as he passed into a dark alley his magnanimous purpose exalted him again and his resolve reappeared as a beautiful thing already accomplished. This vision of achievement dissolved his indecision of the last quarter of an hour: the decision he had made as to his immediate action strengthened him, and by the time he had pushed open

the glass-paneled door with a familiar gesture, he had decided what he would do.

"To-morrow is Saturday and I can't possibly leave the hospital; but on Sunday, on Sunday morning, I shall be at the reformatory!"

II

The morning express did not stop at Crouy, so Antoine had to get off at Venette, the last station before Compiègne. As he jumped from the train he was extremely agitated. In spite of the examination he had to take the following week, he had been unable during the journey to apply his mind to the medical books he had taken with him. The crisis was now approaching. For the last two days his imagination had played so constantly around the happy results of his expedition that he fancied Jacques had already been released; and the only thing he thought about now was to win back his affection.

He had to walk about two miles and a half on a beautiful sunny road. After some rainy weeks the freshness of that March morning gave the first indication of the coming of spring. Antoine looked delightedly at the well cultivated fields on both sides of the road, already green, under the clear sky. On the edge of the horizon he could see the hills of the Oise covered with a light mist and shining in the sunlight. He had a moment of weakness. Surely his surmises must be wrong. This tranquillity, this purity all around him! Could he really be setting out toward a House of Correction?

He had to go through the whole of the village of Crouy before he reached the reformatory. As he was

passing the last houses in the town he had a sudden shock: without ever having seen it, he recognized it from afar, isolated like a new cemetery in its belt of whitewashed walls. In the middle of a chalky plain devoid of any vegetation, it stood, a large tile-covered building, its rows of bare windows and its clock-face gleaming in the sun. One could easily mistake it for a prison, had it not been for the inscription engraved in the gold lettering above the first floor, which showed it to be a philanthropic institution:

OSCAR THIBAULT'S FOUNDATION

He went up the treeless road which led to the reformatory. From a distance the little windows watched the coming visitor. He went to the gate and pulled the bell which tinkled in the Sunday silence. As the gate opened a brown police dog tied to its kennel started barking furiously. Antoine went into the court, or rather the small garden—really a flower-bed surrounded by gravel which made a semi-circle in front of the chief dormitories. He felt himself under observation, although he could not see a soul, the only living thing in sight being the dog to the left pulling on its chain and barking ceaselessly and furiously. On the left of the entrance was a small chapel surmounted by a stone cross, and a low building on which he read: Offices. He went toward it and the closed door opened just as he reached the steps. The dog was still barking as he entered, and he found himself in a tiled hall, ocher-colored, furnished with a few chairs, a convent-like parlor. The room was overheated. A plaster cast bust of M. Thibault decorated the wall to the right. Though it was life-size, the low ceiling made it assume gigantic proportions. It was unequally bal-

anced by a humble crucifix of black wood ornamented with box, which hung on the opposite wall. Antoine remained standing, on the defensive. He certainly had not been mistaken, for everything about the place reeked of a prison!

At last a small window opened in the far wall and an attendant showed his head through the aperture. Antoine handed him his father's card with his own, and asked dryly to speak to the director.

Almost five minutes went by.

Antoine, exasperated, was nearly ready to enter the house himself when he heard a light step in the passage, and a spectacled young man clothed in tobacco-colored flannels, very fair, very young and with a radiant face, came gliding up to him noiselessly in his house-shoes. He held out both his hands:

"Good morning, Doctor! What a happy surprise! How delighted your brother will be! I know all about you. Our beloved Founder speaks very often of his eldest son, the Doctor! Of course there is a certain family resemblance. . . . Yes, yes," he added laughingly, "I assure you! But please come into my study and excuse me for not having introduced myself. I am M. Faisme, the Director."

He pushed Antoine towards the Director's study, walking close behind him and dragging his feet, his hands outstretched as if he were afraid that Antoine might miss a step and that he would be unable to prevent him from falling.

He asked Antoine to sit down and he himself took his place at the desk.

"Is our dear Founder in good health?" he asked in his high-pitched voice. "He never seems to grow any

older—he is a remarkable man! What a pity he could not accompany you!"

Antoine looked around the place with misgivings, and began coldly to study the somewhat Oriental face and the gold spectacles, behind which two small slanted eyes blinked ceaselessly with a joyful expression. Not prepared for so voluble a welcome, he was very much taken aback to find this smiling young man in a lounging suit directing the House of Correction. He had expected to encounter a director as unprepossessing as a private detective or a school principal. He had to make a tremendous effort to regain his composure.

"Heavens!" said M. Faisme suddenly, "I forgot that you have arrived just when it is high mass! All our children are in church and your brother also. What shall we do?" He looked at his watch. "It will take twenty minutes longer, maybe half an hour, if there are many communicants, and that is probable. Our Founder must have told you that we are lucky to have a wonderful chaplain, a young priest, full of energy and incredibly clever. Since he has been with us the religious tone of the Foundation has undergone a great transformation. But what a pity! What shall we do?"

Antoine got up without any ceremony, his intention clear in his mind.

"Well, as the buildings are not occupied at present," he said, looking at the small man, "would it be an indiscretion on my part if I were to visit the colony? I am very anxious to see what it is like as I have heard so much about it all my life. . . ."

"Really?" said the director, taken by surprise. "Nothing is easier," he went on, but did not make a move. He smiled and continued to speak, absent-

mindedly. "You know, the buildings are not very interesting, they are nothing more or less than small barracks; and that being said, you know them as well as I do."

Antoine had remained standing.

"They really interest me," he declared, and as the director was looking at him with an amused and incredulous expression in his small slanting eyes: "I assure you that they really do," he insisted.

"All right, Doctor, I'll be glad to show them to you. Just wait a minute until I put on a coat and some shoes."

He disappeared. Antoine heard an electric bell ringing, then five strokes of a bell in the yard. "So," he thought, "the alarm is being given, the enemy is in the house!" He could not sit still. He walked over to the windows but the panes were glazed. He was saying to himself: "I must be calm, I must keep my eyes open, assure myself of the state of things, and then act; that's what I have to do."

M. Faisme reappeared at last.

They went down. "Our principal court!" the director explained pompously. Then he ran to the dog who had begun to bark again and gave him a brutal kick in the ribs, which made the poor brute disappear into its kennel.

"Do you know anything about gardening? Oh, yes, of course, a doctor knows all about plants." He stopped complacently in the middle of the tiny garden. "Give me some advice. How am I to hide the wall? With ivy? Of course, it will take years. . . ."

Without answering him Antoine started toward the chief building. They went through the ground floor, Antoine ahead, opening boldly every closed door, his

eyes straining to see everything. Nothing escaped him. The upper part of the walls was whitewashed but they were covered with tar to a height of about five feet. As in the director's office, all the windows were glazed and barred. Antoine wanted to open one of them but they required a special key. The director took the instrument out of his pocket and opened a window. Antoine noticed the quickness of his small hands which were yellow and quite plump. Like a detective he looked outside: it was empty, a rectangular space of dried mud without a tree and inclosed by high walls covered with broken glass.

M. Faisme with great animation was explaining the different rooms: studies, carpentry-room, locksmith's and electrician's apprentice rooms, etc. . . . All of them were small but clean. In the dining-rooms the waiters were drying the wooden tables, and a sour smell came from the sinks placed in the corners.

"Every child goes to a sink at the end of the meal to wash his tin plate, his drinking cup and his spoon. We don't allow knives, naturally, not even forks. . . ." Antoine, not understanding, looked at him, so he added in explanation, winking: "Nothing sharp. . . ."

On the first floor there were other classrooms, other workrooms and showers which did not look as if they were often used, but of which the director was inordinately proud. He moved from one room to the other, his arms outstretched, and while speaking, he would mechanically push back a working-bench against the wall, pick up a nail or shut a tap, putting everything in order.

The dormitories were on the second floor. They were of two kinds. Most of them contained about ten beds covered with gray blankets and they looked like

soldiers' barracks except that in the center of each there was an iron cage covered with very fine wire-netting.

"Do you put some of them in there?" asked Antoine.

M. Faisme lifted his arms in a comical fashion which indicated his abhorrence of the idea, and then laughed.

"Of course not! The night superintendent sleeps there. You see, he puts his bed right in the center, at an equal distance from every one so that he sees and hears everything and is well-protected at the same time. He has his alarm bell: the electric wiring is under the floor."

Other dormitories were like cages, built in and secured with wire-netting like those of a menagerie. M. Faisme stopped on the threshold of one. His smile at times assumed a thoughtful and sophisticated expression, lending to his round face the peculiar sadness of certain Buddhas.

"Doctor," he explained, "here we put the incorrigible ones! Those who arrive here too late to be truly reformed, and they are far from being the pick of the bunch. Some of them are full of vice, you see: so we are obliged to keep them isolated at night."

Antoine peered through one of the gratings. In the darkness he saw an unmade cot and walls covered with obscene drawings and inscriptions. Instinctively he recoiled.

"Don't look, it is too sad," sighed the director, dragging him away. "See, here is the passage where the superintendent walks all night long. The guard here does not go to bed and the light is kept on, because although they are under lock and key the young ruffians would be quite capable of making a surprise

attack. Yes, indeed!" He shook his head and suddenly he laughed, with blinking eyes. All sadness had disappeared from his face. "All sorts of things happen here," he concluded naïvely, shrugging his shoulders.

Antoine was too much interested in what he saw to think of all the questions he had prepared, but he asked:

"How do you punish them? I'd like to see the punishment cells."

M. Faisme retreated a step, opened his eyes wide and clapped his hands together.

"Heavens! Cells! Doctor, do you think you are in a prison? La Roquette, here? No, we have no cells, thank God! Our regulations do not allow them, and of course our dear Founder is very much opposed to them!"

Antoine, nonplussed, felt on him the ironical glance of those Oriental eyes, whose lashes moved rapidly behind the spectacles. His prying rôle had begun to embarrass him. Nothing of what he had seen justified his keeping it up. He wondered rather shamefacedly whether the director had not already discovered the misgivings which had brought him to Crouy. But how could one tell? His frankness seemed real in spite of the malicious gleam in his eyes.

The director stopped laughing, went up to Antoine and laid his hand on his arm:

"You were joking, weren't you? You know as well as I do the results of excessive severity—revolt, or what is worse, hypocrisy. . . . Our Founder spoke eloquently upon that subject, at the Paris Conference, the year of the Exhibition. . . ."

He had lowered his voice and was speaking in a

confidential tone, as if they were kindred spirits set apart, the only ones capable of discussing such problems of pedagogy without falling into the ordinary pitfalls. This flattered Antoine and his favorable impression increased.

"We have in the yard, as in military barracks, small cells which the architect called in his plan *punishment cells*. . . ."

"Indeed?"

". . . but we keep our coal and our potatoes there. Of what use are cells?" he went on. "Much more can be gained through persuasion."

"Really?" said Antoine.

The director smiled shrewdly and again laid his hand on Antoine's arm:

"You must let me explain, of course, that what I call persuasion is depriving the culprits of certain foods. Our children are all greedy, as is natural at their age. There are unsuspected persuasive virtues, Doctor, in dry bread, but one must know how to use it. It is absolutely essential not to isolate the child who is to be convinced that he has done wrong. You see how far we have progressed from the idea of solitary confinement. We make the child eat his dry bread-crust in a corner of the refectory at the time of the best meal, that is to say, at midday while he smells the good hot stew and sees others enjoying themselves! That argument is irresistible, don't you think? At that age one becomes thin very quickly! It takes a fortnight, sometimes three weeks, never longer. I have always been able to master the most difficult ones. Persuasion!" he concluded, his eyes wide open and round. "And I never have to use other means, I have never

so much as lifted a finger to any of those little ones confided to my care!"

His face was full of pride and affection. He did indeed look as if he really loved them—loved even the good-for-nothing scamps who gave him a lot of trouble.

They went down again. M. Faisme took out his watch. "Let me now show you a very edifying spectacle. If you describe it to our Founder I am sure he will be pleased."

They went through the garden and into the chapel. M. Faisme offered the holy water to Antoine. Antoine saw the backs of sixty boys, dressed in unbleached linen, in military line, kneeling on the pavement of the chapel. They were all motionless and four mustached guards, in blue uniforms with red trimmings, walked up and down ceaselessly watching them. At the altar the priest, assisted by two acolytes, was ending his mass.

Antoine whispered: "Where is Jacques?"

The director pointed to the balcony under which they were standing and he went back to the door on tiptoe.

"Your brother is always in the gallery," said M. Faisme, as soon as they were outside. "He is alone there, that is to say, with the attendant who waits upon him. And about that; I wish you would tell your father that almost a week ago we gave Jacques the new servant we told him about. The other one, old Léon, was really too old, and will be better watching one of the workrooms. The new one is a young man from Lorraine, really a fine fellow; he has just finished his military service where he was a colonel's orderly, and had excellent references. It will be less lonesome for

your brother, especially during his walks, don't you think? But, good gracious! Here I am chatting away and they are coming out."

The dog began barking furiously. M. Faisme silenced it, straightened his glasses and stood in the middle of the main courtyard.

The chapel door had been opened wide and the children, three by three, accompanied by the guards, filed past in military fashion as if on parade. They were all hatless and wore sandals which gave to their march the dull sound of a gymnasium; their linen tunics were clean and gathered round the waist by leather belts on which the buckles shone in the sun. The eldest looked about seventeen or eighteen; the youngest ten or eleven. Most of them were pale, their eyes were lowered and they were very sad and old-looking. Antoine, who regarded them attentively, did not see anything to cause him misgivings—no half-hearted smiles, not a single surly expression. Those children did not look incorrigible, nor, he had to admit, did they look like martyrs, either.

When the small column had disappeared into the dormitories, the stairs of which resounded for a long time with the dull rhythmical thud of their marching, he turned to M. Faisme, who was looking at him questioningly.

"They make an excellent appearance," he said.

The small man did not answer. He was rubbing his pudgy hands as if he were washing them, and behind his glasses his gratified eyes shone with pride.

Only then, when the courtyard was deserted, did Jacques appear upon the sun-swept steps of the chapel.

Could it be Jacques? He had changed such a lot, and grown so much that Antoine looked at him with-

out recognition. He did not wear the uniform, but an ordinary suit, and a felt hat; he had thrown his coat across his shoulder; he was followed by a young man about twenty years old, fair and stocky, who did not wear a guard's uniform. They came down the steps, both unaware of Antoine and the director. Jacques walked quietly, looking down at his feet, and when still some distance from M. Faisme he raised his head, stopped, looked astonished and took off his hat at once. The movement was perfectly natural and yet Antoine suspected that his surprise was feigned. Jacques's face was calm, and although smiling, he did not show any real joy. Antoine went up to him, holding out his hands and trying, on his part, to look happy, too.

"Now, isn't this a delightful surprise, Jacques?" asked the director. "I am going to scold you though. You must put on your coat and button it when you are in the chapel, for the gallery is damp and you'll catch cold!"

Jacques stopped looking at his brother as soon as M. Faisme started speaking to him, and gazed straight at the director with a respectful and attentive expression, as if he were trying to understand everything that the words could mean. Then, at once, without answering, he put his coat on.

"You know, you have grown such an awful lot . . ." stammered Antoine. He was studying his brother carefully, analyzing the complete change of attitude and expression, to find what had numbed the boy's spirit.

"It is not at all cold, will you stay outside a while?" proposed M. Faisme. "Jacques will take you to his room after you have gone around the garden together."

Antoine hesitated and then looking his brother straight into his eyes said: "Do you want to?"

Jacques seemed not to have heard. Antoine thought that he did not care to stay there in full view of the windows of the reformatory.

"No," he said, "we shall be better in his room. What do you think?"

"Just as you like," said the director, "but before you go, I want to show you something else. You must see all our boarders. Come with us, Jacques."

Jacques followed M. Faisme who, with outstretched arms, laughing like a schoolboy playing a prank, directed Antoine to a wooden structure erected against the entrance wall. Here were a dozen rabbit-hutches, for M. Faisme made a hobby of raising rabbits.

"That litter was born on Monday," he explained delightedly, "and they are already opening their eyes, the darlings! Here are the males. You see this one, Doctor," he said, and his arm disappeared in a hutch and came back holding by the ears a fat Belgian hare, with silvery fur, kicking for all he was worth. "You know that one is absolutely incorrigible!"

He meant it and was laughing delightedly. Antoine thought of the dormitory upstairs with its iron-barred hutches.

M. Faisme turned to them, and smiled like a person misunderstood: "But, Heavens, here I am chattering like a magpie and I see you are listening to me only for politeness' sake, aren't you? I'll take you to Jacques's room and leave you here. Go first, Jacques, and lead the way."

Jacques went ahead, and Antoine caught up with him, laying a hand upon his shoulder. He was trying

to recall the sickly, nervous, undersized child that he had rescued in Marseilles a year ago.

"You are as tall as I am."

From Jacques's shoulder, Antoine's hand went up to the nape of the neck, which was like the scraggy neck of a bird. All of his limbs were lanky, almost fragile, his wrists showed underneath his sleeves, his trousers revealed the ankles, and his new way of walking, while awkward and stiff, was at the same time full of youth and elasticity.

The pavilion, set aside for the private wards, was an outhouse of the administration building, and could only be reached through the offices. Five identical bedrooms opened on a passage painted a deep ocher. M. Faisme explained that as Jacques was the only occupant of the ward, and the other rooms were empty, they had given one of them to Jacques's attendant and the rest were used as storerooms.

"And here is our prisoner's cell," said the head of the institution, chucking Jacques under the chin with his pudgy finger. Jacques smiled and let him pass.

Antoine glanced quickly around the room. It looked like a modest but well-kept hotel room. It was papered with a flowered paper and had plenty of light, although this came from the ceiling, through two skylights of frosted glass, covered with screens and bars. The ceiling being very high, the skylights were about twelve feet from the ground. No sun ever entered the room, but it was heated, overheated, as a matter of fact, by the furnace in the administration building. For furniture there were two rush-seated chairs, a pine wardrobe and a black table where the books and dictionaries were arrayed as if for a battle. The small square bed, as smooth as a billiard table, had

clean sheets. The basin was on a clean cloth and several clean towels hung from the towel-rack.

This careful investigation completely dispelled Antoine's misgivings. Everything he had seen for the last hour was just the opposite of what he had expected to find. Jacques lived very much apart from the other wards; and was treated with affectionate deference, and the director was a simple man with as little of the jailer about him as one could possibly expect. M. Thibault's information was correct. Though by nature obstinate, Antoine had been obliged to abandon his suspicions one after another.

He felt that the director was looking at him. "You seem to be quite comfortable!" he said at once, turning to Jacques.

Jacques did not answer. He removed his coat and hat, which the servant took from him and hung on a peg.

"Your brother just said that he thinks you are very comfortable," repeated the director.

Jacques wheeled around quickly. His face had a very polite, very well-bred expression which Antoine had never seen before.

"Oh, yes, sir, very comfortable."

"Of course we must not exaggerate," went on the director, smiling. "Everything is very simple but we try to see that everything is clean. And, of course, it is Arthur whom we must congratulate," he added, turning to the young attendant. "That bed is made as if for military inspection. . . ."

Arthur's face betrayed his pleasure. Antoine looked at him and smiled in a friendly way. Arthur had a round head, indefinite features, pale eyes, and something attractive and loyal in his smiling expression.

He had remained near the door and was pulling at his mustache, which seemed colorless in contrast to his tanned complexion.

"So that is the jailer I imagined lurking in the shadow of a dungeon with a lantern and a bunch of keys," thought Antoine, and laughing to himself he went up to the books and looked at them cheerfully.

"Sallust? How is your Latin getting on?" still smiling happily.

M. Faisme answered for Jacques. "I may be wrong to say this in front of him," winking at Jacques and pretending to hesitate. "But I must say that his teacher is perfectly satisfied. He works his eight hours a day," he went on more seriously. He went to the blackboard hanging on the wall and straightened it. "But that does not prevent him from walking every day in any weather—your father is very strongly in favor of exercise—for two hours with Arthur. Both of them have perfectly good legs. I leave them free to take what roads they wish. Of course, with old Léon, it was a different matter and I don't think they went very far, but to make up for it they gathered plants along the hedges. Isn't that right? I must tell you that old Léon had been with a chemist when he was young and knew a lot of herbs and also their Latin names. It was very instructive. But I would rather have Jacques walk a lot in the country, for it is much better for his health."

Antoine looked at his brother several times while M. Faisme was speaking. One would have sworn that Jacques listened as if in a dream, and that frequently he had to force himself to pay attention. Then a kind of despair would make his mouth open and his eyelashes tremble.

"Heavens, here I am chattering away and Jacques has not seen his brother for such a long time!" exclaimed M. Faisme very cordially as he started toward the door. "You are going back by the eleven o'clock train, I suppose?" he asked.

M. Faisme seemed to take his return by that train for granted and although Antoine had not intended to leave so soon he could not resist the chance to get away, for the gloominess of the place and Jacques's indifference depressed him, and he had found out what he wanted to know. There was nothing more for him to do.

"Yes," he said, "I am sorry that I have to leave so early, as I must be back at the hospital for the second round."

"Don't be sorry. That's the only train before the evening one. I'll see you later."

The brothers were alone. There was an awkward pause. "Take the chair," said Jacques, getting ready to sit upon the bed. He saw the second chair and then he changed his mind, offered it to Antoine and repeated in a very natural manner: "Take the chair," as if he had said: "Sit down." And he sat down himself.

None of this had remained unnoticed by Antoine. He was suspicious at once, and asked:

"You have only one chair ordinarily?"

"Yes, but Arthur lent us his as he does on my lesson days."

Antoine did not press the point.

"Really, you are not badly housed," he remarked, looking around him again. Then pointing to the clean sheets and towels:

"Are they changed often?"

"On Sundays."

Antoine used the casual gay tone which he always did, but in this room with the high ceiling, and because of Jacques's passive attitude, it sounded aggressive and sarcastic.

"Just think," he said, "I was afraid, I don't know why, that you were ill-treated here. . . ."

Jacques looked at him in a surprised way and smiled. Antoine kept looking at his brother:

"Really and truly, between ourselves, have you no complaints to make?"

"None."

"You don't wish me, now that I am here, to ask the director for something you want?"

"What could I want?"

"I don't know. Try to think."

Jacques looked as if he were thinking, smiled again and shook his head.

"No, you can see that everything is all right."

His voice had changed as well as the rest of him. It was a man's voice now, deep and full with a pleasing, though grave tone, rather unexpected in such an adolescent.

Antoine continued to look at him.

"How much you have changed. But it's more than that. You are not the same at all. You are absolutely different. . . ."

He was still looking at Jacques, trying to find in this new face traces of the old features. He had the same red hair, rather darkened, but still growing low upon his forehead. His ill-shaped nose was still sharp, his lips were broken but shadowed by a scarcely perceptible down, his jaw was as heavy but bigger. His

ears stood out as they had always done, and seemed to pull up the mouth and make it large. But nothing remained of the child of yesterday. "His temperament's changed, too," he thought. "Before he was never still, and now look at his expressionless, sleepy face. He used to be so nervous and now he is positively phlegmatic. . . ."

"Stand up and let me look at you."

Jacques let himself be looked at with a complacent smile which, however, did not brighten his face. There was a sort of cloud before his eyes.

Antoine felt of his arms and legs.

"How you have grown! You don't feel that you've outgrown your strength?"

Jacques shook his head. Antoine held him by the wrists. He noted the paleness of his skin upon which the freckles showed very dark; and the faint circles around his eyes.

"Your complexion is not so very good," he said rather seriously. He frowned and seemed about to add something but stopped.

Suddenly Jacques's expressionless and submissive face made him think of the suspicion he had felt when Jacques first appeared in the courtyard.

"Did they tell you I was waiting for you after mass?" he asked abruptly.

Jacques gazed at him without understanding.

"When you came out of chapel," Antoine repeated, "did you know that I was there?"

"Of course not, how could I know?" He smiled in naïve astonishment.

Antoine muttered: "I thought . . . May I smoke?" he went on to change the subject.

Jacques looked at him uneasily and as Antoine offered his cigarette case:

"No, I can't." His face became gloomy.

Antoine did not know what to say. As always, when one wants to go on talking with a person who hardly answers, he exhausted himself asking questions.

"So, really and truly," he began again, "you don't need anything? You have everything you require?"

"Yes."

"Is your bed good? Have you plenty of bedclothes?"

"Oh, yes. I am too warm really."

"Is your teacher kind to you?"

"Yes, very."

"You are not bored, always working alone like that?"

"No."

"What about the evenings?"

"I go to bed after my dinner at eight o'clock."

"And what time do you get up?"

"When the bell rings at half-past six."

"Does the chaplain come to see you sometimes?"

"Yes."

"Is he nice?"

Jacques looked at Antoine in a surprised way. Not understanding the question, he did not answer.

"And does the director come too?"

"Yes, often."

"He seems all right; is he liked?"

"I don't know. Yes, of course."

"You never meet the . . . others?"

"Never."

Jacques kept his eyes lowered, but at every question

he started slightly, as if he had trouble in passing from one subject to another.

"What about poetry? Do you still write poetry?" asked Antoine in a jovial tone.

"Certainly not."

"Why not?"

Jacques shook his head, then smiled placidly for a few seconds. His smile would have been the same had Antoine asked him: "Do you still play with a hoop?"

Then Antoine, at the end of his resources, decided to mention Daniel. Jacques had not expected this, and he reddened a little.

"How can I hear from him," he answered, "we don't get any letters here."

"But don't you write to him?" went on Antoine.

He looked hard at Jacques. The boy smiled as he had at the mention of poetry; then shrugged his shoulders gently:

"All that's ancient history. Please don't speak any more about it."

What did he mean? If he had answered: "No, I have never written to him," Antoine would have made him confess because his brother's passivity was beginning to annoy him. But Jacques avoided the question in such a sad and firm manner that Antoine was completely at a loss. At the same moment he noticed that Jacques had just glanced behind him towards the door; and in his state of instinctive hostility all his suspicions returned. It was a glass door so that the room could be watched from the hall; and above the door there was a transom without glass but screened so that what they said could be overheard.

"Is there somebody in the passage?" said Antoine roughly but lowering his voice.

Jacques looked at him as if he had suddenly gone crazy.

"What, in the passage? Yes, sometimes. . . . Why? I saw old Léon going by."

Just then there was a knock and old Léon came in to get acquainted with Jacques's brother. He sat familiarly upon the edge of the table.

"Well, I hope you find him in good health? He has grown some, since the autumn, hey?"

He was laughing. He had the face of an old soldier with his drooping mustache; and his happy laugh made his countenance flush all over, covering it with a thousand little red lines even to the whites of his eyes, which grew clouded. Their expression was fatherly, though mischievous.

"I have been sent back to the workhouse," he explained, shrugging his shoulders, "and I had grown so accustomed to M. Jacques!"

And he said as he was going away: "What is the use of grumbling about life? . . . Present my compliments to M. Thibault, if that is not asking too much —from old Léon. He knows me well, you know!"

"What a jolly old man," said Antoine when he had gone.

He tried to renew the conversation.

"I'll see that he gets a letter from you if you like," he went on, and as Jacques did not understand: "You don't want to write a line to Fontanin?"

He tried again to see on his brother's quiet features a shadow of emotion, a memory of the past; but in vain. This time the boy shook his head without even smiling:

"No, thank you. I have nothing to say to him. All that is finished and over with."

Antoine stopped. He felt exasperated and time was passing; he pulled out his watch.

"Half-past ten. In five minutes I shall have to go."

Jacques looked disturbed suddenly and anxious to talk. What about? He questioned his brother about his health, the train time, about his examinations; and when Antoine rose he was struck by the way in which Jacques sighed:

"So soon? Please wait awhile. . . ."

The thought crossed his mind that the child had detected his apparent coldness, and that perhaps this visit had given him more pleasure than he had shown.

"Are you glad that I came?" he asked stiffly.

Jacques seemed to be thinking of something else. He looked astonished and answered with a polite smile.

"Oh, yes! Of course, very glad. Thank you very much."

"Well, I'll try to come back some other time," said Antoine, annoyed.

Once again he looked his younger brother straight in the eyes; and his love for him made him venture to say:

"I often think of you, my dear boy. I am always afraid that you are not happy here. . . ." They were near the door. Antoine took hold of his hand: "You would tell me the truth, would you not?"

Jacques looked perplexed and leaned towards him as if he wanted to confide something. At last he said hurriedly:

"Would you please give something to Arthur, the servant. . . . He is so kind about things . . ." and

as Antoine hesitated quite surprised: "You will, won't you?"

"But," said Antoine, "will it be all right?"

"Yes, of course. As you go, say good-by to him and give him a good tip . . . please?" His attitude was beseeching.

"All right, I will. And what about you? Answer me. You are not unhappy, are you?"

"No!" replied Jacques with a kind of impatience in his voice, then in a lower tone: "How much are you going to give him?"

"I don't know. How much? Will ten francs be enough? Shall I make it twenty?"

"Yes, yes, twenty!" said Jacques rather shamefacedly but glad. "Thank you, Antoine." And he shook his brother's hand.

The servant was just passing the door as Antoine came out from Jacques's room. Without any hesitation he accepted the tip and a blush of pleasure came to his open, rather childish countenance. He accompanied Antoine to the director's study.

"A quarter to eleven," M. Faisme announced. "You have plenty of time to catch the train if you go at once."

They crossed the hall where M. Thibault's bust stood and Antoine looked at it now less sarcastically. He understood how legitimate was his father's pride in this great Institution which he alone had created and Antoine felt rather proud that he was his son.

M. Faisme saw Antoine to the gate, and sent his respects to the Founder, laughing as he spoke, and blinking his eyes behind his gold spectacles. He took Antoine's hand familiarly in his own which were soft and

pudgy as a woman's. At last Antoine was able to free himself. The little man remained on the road, hatless under the sun, his arms outstretched, still laughing and nodding his head in a friendly way.

"Well, I let my imagination run away with me as if I were a midinette," Antoine thought as he walked along. "Really, the outfit is all right and Jacques doesn't seem unhappy. I was stupid to have wasted so much time acting as a prosecutor instead of talking to Jacques as a friend." And he almost believed that Jacques had seen him go away without any regret. "Of course," he thought crossly, "it is his fault, he did not care a bit!" But in spite of that, he was sorry he had not made the friendly overtures himself.

Though Antoine was twenty-four, he did not keep a mistress but just took what came his way. Yet he longed for an opportunity to take pity on some weak human being, to lend his strength to someone. The further away he went the stronger grew his affection for his younger brother. When would he see him again? Any excuse would have made him turn back.

He had been walking with his head bent to avoid the sun and when he looked up he saw that he had taken the wrong road. Some children showed him a short cut through the fields. He quickened his pace, wondering to himself: "If I miss my train, what shall I do?" He saw himself returning to the reformatory. He would spend the day with Jacques, he would tell him all about his unfounded fears, his journey unknown to his father; he would be a comrade, he would remind Jacques of what had happened in the cab when they came back from Marseilles and how, on that day, he had thought they might become real friends.

His desire to miss his train became so strong that he slowed his pace, not knowing what to do. Suddenly he heard the engine whistle and saw a cloud of smoke above a clump of trees. He was in sight of the station, with his ticket in his pocket, and he had only to jump into a carriage, even from the wrong side of the tracks. With head back, and beard streaming in the wind, elbows in, he breathed deeply as he ran, proud of his strength and sure that he would catch the train.

But he had overlooked the ditch between him and the railway. He had to follow the road which turned and went underneath the tracks to the station. He ran faster and did his best, but in vain, for he came out on the station side of the tracks just as the train pulled out. He had missed it by a hundred yards.

His pride was so great that he would not admit defeat and consoled himself by deciding that he had wanted to miss it. "I could still jump into the luggage van, if I wished to," he thought for a second, "but I do not choose to, for if I did I would not see Jacques again." He stopped, quite pleased with himself.

And at once what he had imagined a moment ago became a reality. He would lunch at the inn and then go back to the reformatory to spend the day with his brother.

III

It was not quite one o'clock when Antoine found himself again in front of the Thibault Foundation. M. Faisme was just going out. He was so surprised that he remained petrified for a few seconds, his eyes gleaming behind his glasses. Antoine told him of his bad luck and then M. Faisme burst out laughing and became loquacious again.

Antoine offered to take Jacques out for the whole afternoon.

"Damn . . ." said the director, not knowing what to do. "Our regulations."

Antoine pleaded so well that he ended by winning his case.

"You will have to explain this to our Founder. . . . I shall get Jacques for you."

"I'll go with you," said Antoine.

Unfortunately he arrived at an inopportune moment. From the passage Antoine saw his brother in the lavatory, the door of which was held wide open by Arthur, who leaned against the wall smoking his pipe.

Antoine hurried into Jacques's room. The director rubbed his hands and chuckled gleefully.

"You see?" he said, "the children intrusted to us are always watched."

Jacques came back, buttoning his trousers as he entered the room. Antoine thought that he would be ashamed, but his features expressed nothing, not even

his astonishment at seeing Antoine again. M. Faisme explained that he had given permission for Jacques to go out with his brother until six. Jacques looked intently at him as if he were trying to understand just what was happening but did not say a word.

"Now, I have to run away, excuse me," went on M. Faisme in his piping voice. "My municipal council has a meeting. I say mine, because I am the mayor!" he shouted from the door with an outburst of laughter as if it were the most ludicrous thing in the world, and indeed it seemed so to Antoine, who smiled.

Jacques dressed himself slowly. With noticeable attentiveness Arthur helped him to dress, even dusting his shoes. Jacques was passive.

The room did not look as well kept as it had in the morning, when Antoine had been agreeably surprised. He looked around to find out why; the lunch tray had been left on the table, with a dirty plate, an empty cup and some crumbs. The clean row of towels had disappeared and only one spotted towel was hanging upon the rack. Under the basin there was an old and dirty piece of oilcloth and the white sheets had been replaced by unbleached, heavy ones, very much tossed. All his suspicions came back, but he did not ask any questions.

When they were alone on the road:

"Where are we going?" said Antoine gayly. "You don't know Compiègne? If we follow the Oise it is a little more than three miles from here. Does that suit you?"

Jacques assented. He seemed to be trying not to oppose his brother in anything.

Antoine took his brother's arm and suited his step to his.

"Well, what do you think of the towel trick?" he said, looking at Jacques and laughing.

"The towel trick?" repeated Jacques without understanding.

"Yes, this morning while they were showing me around the whole establishment they had time to put clean white sheets and beautiful new towels in your room. But as ill-luck would have it I came back when they did not expect me and . . ."

Jacques stopped and forced a smile to his face:

"It looks as if you had decided to think everything that is being done at the Foundation bad," he said at last in his deep voice, which trembled slightly. He stopped talking and began walking again and then spoke with effort as if it bored him to talk about such an unimportant matter. "It is much simpler than you think. The linen is changed the first and third Sundays of every month. Arthur, who has only been looking after me for the last ten days, changed the sheets and the towels last Sunday. He thought he was right in doing it again to-day, as it was Sunday. But at the linen room he was told he had been mistaken and that he would have to bring back the clean linen as I am not entitled to it before next week!" And he relapsed into silence and looked at the countryside.

The walk was beginning badly. Antoine at once tried to change the subject but regret at his stupidity obsessed him and he could not talk in the pleasant and the simple way he wanted. Jacques answered yes or no when Antoine questioned him but without any show of interest. At last he said:

"Please, Antoine, don't mention anything to the

director about that linen business. Arthur would be scolded for nothing.

"All right."

"Nor to father?" added Jacques.

"Of course, I won't say a word to anybody, don't worry. Listen," he went on, "I am going to tell you the truth: Think, I had made up my mind, I don't know why, that everything here was all wrong and that you were unhappy. . . ."

Jacques turned slightly towards Antoine and listened very attentively.

"I spent the morning searching," went on Antoine. "I understood at last that I was mistaken, then I pretended to miss my train. I did not want to go away without having had time to talk awhile with you, you see?"

Jacques did not answer. Was the idea of such a talk pleasing to him? Antoine was not sure and being afraid he might say the wrong thing again, he was silent.

The road was sloping down toward the river and it made walking easier. They reached a part of the river which had been made into a canal, where a small iron bridge went over the sluice. Three big empty barges were floating on the water, with their hulls exposed and hardly moving.

"Would you like to go on a barge?" asked Antoine gayly. "To float slowly on the canals, between poplars, stopping at the sluices in the morning and in the evening at sunset smoking a cigarette on the bridge, thinking of nothing and dangling your feet over the water. Do you still draw?"

This time it was quite plain that Jacques had been

startled and Antoine was also certain that he had blushed.

"Why?" he said in an uncertain tone.

"Oh, nothing," went on Antoine, puzzled. "Because this would be a rather amusing sketch to do, these three barges, the sluice and the small bridge. . . ."

The tow path grew wider and became a road. They had reached the wide stretch of the Oise whose swollen waters flowed towards them.

"There is Compiègne," said Antoine.

He stopped and put his hand up to his forehead to shelter his eyes from the sun. In the distance he recognized above the green treetops the belfry and the round church tower and then looked at his brother. He saw that Jacques had also sheltered his eyes—was looking down at his feet and appeared to be waiting for him to walk on. Antoine did so without saying anything further.

All Compiègne was out. Antoine and Jacques mixed with the crowd walking on the bridge. There must have been a session of the military examination board because crowds of boys in their Sunday best were buying big bunches of tricolored ribbons from the street vendors and, holding each other's arms stretched across the paths, stumbled along singing military songs. On the Promenade, among girls in light-colored dresses and Dragoons who had escaped from the barracks, families met and greeted each other.

Jacques became quite dizzy and depressed from looking at all these people.

"Let's go somewhere else, Antoine . . ." he begged.

In the middle of the Promenade they turned up a walled-in street which was steep, dark and silent. When they arrived on the Place du Palais they were

blinded by the glare of the sun. Jacques blinked and they stopped and sat down under the trees which were not large enough to give any shade.

"Listen," said Jacques, laying his hand on Antoine's knee. The bells of Saint-Jacques were beginning to ring for Vespers and their vibrations mingled with the broad daylight.

Antoine thought that the child was unconsciously absorbing the joyfulness of that first Sunday of spring. He ventured to say:

"What are you thinking about, old man?"

Instead of answering, Jacques rose and they went without speaking into the Park.

Jacques did not look at the beauty of the landscape and seemed especially anxious to avoid the places where there were people. It was quiet on the railed-in terraces around the castle, and he went toward them. Antoine followed him talking about what he saw, the carefully trimmed box hedge showing up against the green of the lawns and pigeons poised on the shoulders of the statues, but he only got evasive answers.

Jacques asked suddenly:

"You spoke to him?"

"To whom?"

"To Fontanin."

"Yes, I met him in the Latin Quarter. You know that he is a day-boy at Louis-le-Grand now?"

"Really?" said Jacques, and he added, his voice trembling, and for the first time there was in it a reminder of the threatening voice he had once used so often: "You did not tell him where I was?"

"He did not ask me anything. Why? You don't want him to know?"

"Certainly not."

"Why?"

"Because."

"That's a very good reason! But you must have another one?"

Jacques looked stupidly at him. He did not understand that Antoine was joking, so did not smile. He walked on, adding suddenly:

"What about Gise? Does she know?"

"Where you are? No. I don't think so. But one can never be sure of anything with children." And sticking to the subject which Jacques himself had started, he went on: "Some days she looks as if she were already grown up, and she listens to everything that is said with her eyes wide open. Then on other days she is still a baby. Do you know that last night Mademoiselle looked for her everywhere and she had been playing with her doll under the hall table all the time! And she will be eleven soon!"

They went down to the wistaria bower and Jacques stopped at the bottom of the stairs near a pink marble sphinx and caressed its polished forehead which shone in the sun. Was he thinking about Gise or about Mademoiselle? Was he suddenly seeing again the old hall table with its fringed cover and its silver tray full of visiting cards? Antoine thought so and went on gayly:

"I really don't know where she gets all her ideas. The house is not very cheerful for a child. Mademoiselle adores her, but you know what she is. She is frightened of everything and never leaves the girl alone one minute and never allows her to do anything. . . ."

He was laughing and looking at his brother with

an air of joyous understanding. He felt that all these details of family life were their common treasure which had no meaning but for themselves and which would always be for them part of something unique and irreplaceable, childhood memories. Jacques only smiled diffidently.

Antoine, however, went on:

"The meals are not very cheerful either. Father says nothing or else he repeats his speeches to Mademoiselle and enumerates every one of his movements during the day. By the way, you know that his nomination for election to the Institute is nearly certain!"

"Really?" His face showed signs of affection. He thought a minute and smiled: "That's splendid!"

"All his friends are doing their best," Antoine went on. "The Abbé is especially helpful and he has acquaintances everywhere. The election will take place in three weeks." He was not laughing any more:

"After all, you know, it does mean something to be a member of the Institute. Father truly deserves it, don't you think?"

"Yes!" said Jacques spontaneously. "Papa is kind, you know, in his heart. . . ." He stopped, blushed and seemed about to say something but unable to make up his mind to do it.

"I am waiting for Father to be comfortably installed under the *Coupole* to revolt," went on Antoine with animation. "I am really very cramped in the room at the end of the passage. I have no more space for my books. You know that Gise is to have your old room? I want Father to rent for me the small apartment on the ground floor, the one the old Beau is leaving on the fifteenth. It has three rooms and

I'll have a study where I can receive my patients and I'll fit the kitchen . . . out as a laboratory. . . ."

He felt ashamed suddenly to be boasting thus to the prisoner about his free life, his desire for his own comforts and realized that he had been speaking about Jacques's room as if he were never to go back there. He stopped. Jacques looked indifferent.

"And now," said Antoine, to change the subject, "let us go and have something to eat. Aren't you hungry?"

He had lost all hope of establishing any point of contact between them.

They went back to town. The streets were alive with people and the pastry shops were full. Jacques stopped on the pavement in front of the window of one full of cakes shining with sugar, cream bursting out of them, and the sight appeared to suffocate him.

"Well, go in!" said Antoine, smiling.

Jacques's hands shook as he took the plate Antoine held out to him. They sat down far inside the shop with a pyramid of cakes between them. The smell of vanilla and of hot pastry came through the half-open service door. Jacques crouched silently on his chair, his eyes bloodshot as if he were going to cry. He ate quickly and after each cake would wait for Antoine to help him to another and then he would begin again. Antoine asked for two glasses of port wine. Jacques took his glass between his shaking fingers, and tasted the wine which burnt his throat and made him cough. Antoine sipped his as if he were not paying any attention to his brother. Jacques grew bolder and took another sip, it was like a ball of fire in his throat, then he took another sip and finally drained the glass. And when Antoine filled his glass

for the second time he pretended not to have seen it and tried too late to prevent him.

When they left the pastry shop the sun was setting and it was much cooler. But Jacques did not notice the change in temperature, for his cheeks were burning and he felt all through him a sensation of well-being to which he was so little accustomed that it was rather painful.

"We have three miles in front of us," said Antoine. "We must go back."

Jacques was on the verge of tears. He jammed his fists into his pockets, tightened his jaws and lowered his head. Antoine glanced at him sideways and saw such a change on his face that he was frightened:

"Has this long walk tired you?" he asked.

Jacques heard a new note of tenderness in his brother's voice and incapable of uttering a word, he turned towards Antoine, his eyes filled with tears.

Antoine was surprised and followed him silently. But when they had gone through the town, crossed the bridge and were on the tow path, he went close to his brother and took his arm.

"You don't miss your usual walk?" he said, smiling.

Jacques did not answer, but suddenly the port wine, the sunset and the sweet feeling of liberty which had intoxicated him for hours, made him so sad that his emotion got the better of him and he sobbed. Antoine put his arms around him, held him up and made him sit down on the bank and rest against his shoulder. He stopped trying to pry into Jacques's affairs, but he felt better because the indifference that he had been struggling to overcome all day had at last disappeared.

They were alone on the deserted bank, alone with

the flowing waters, under a sky illuminated only by the glow of the setting sun. In front of them they could see a wherry balanced by the current at the end of its chain pressing down the rushes.

They had a long way to go yet and could not remain there forever. Antoine tried to force the child to lift up his head.

"What are you thinking of? What made you cry?"

Jacques moved closer to him.

Antoine tried to remember the words which had made him burst into tears.

"Did you cry because you were thinking of your usual walk?"

"Yes," said the boy, who felt he must answer something.

Antoine insisted:

"Why? Where do you walk on Sundays?"

No answer.

"You don't like going out with Arthur?"

"No."

"Why don't you say so? If you would rather have old Léon, it is quite easy to . . ."

"Oh! no!" interrupted Jacques, unexpectedly violent. He rose and showed a face full of bitterness, so expressive and so new to Antoine that he was startled.

As if incapable of remaining still Jacques started walking at a great pace. Antoine followed him. He was silent. After waiting awhile and at the risk of making a mistake, for he wanted most of all else to open the sore that he thought existed, Antoine went on resolutely.

"Then you did not like going out with old Léon either?"

Jacques kept on, his eyes wide open, his teeth clenched, without saying a word.

"And yet old Léon was kind to you, wasn't he?" ventured Antoine.

No answer. Antoine was afraid that Jacques might withdraw into himself again and tried to take hold of his arm, but the child shook him off, quickening his pace. Antoine was following him, full of perplexity, not knowing how to regain his confidence, when Jacques with a sudden sob slowed down and began crying without turning his head:

"Don't tell anybody, Antoine, don't ever tell anyone. . . . With old Léon I never used to go walking or hardly ever. . . ."

He stopped talking. Antoine opened his mouth to ask questions, but felt instinctively that it was better to be silent and he was right, for Jacques, hesitatingly, in a hoarse voice, went on:

"At first, yes. . . . It was while we were walking that he began telling me things. And he lent me books. I didn't even know such things existed! And after that he told me he would send letters for me if I wanted to. It was then that I wrote to Daniel. But I did not have any money for stamps, so you see . . . he had seen that I could draw a little. . . . You can guess. . . . It is he who told me how to do them. . . . Then, in exchange, he paid for the stamps for Daniel's letters. But in the evenings he used to show my drawings to the other guards and they all wanted them and more and more complicated ones. . . . And from that time old Léon did what he liked. Instead of going to the country, we went around the Foundation to the village. The village boys used to run after us. . . . We used to go down an alley to reach the inn

through the back yard. He drank, played cards and I don't know what else and they hid me in a laundry under an old blanket. . . ."

"They hid you?"

"Yes, in an empty laundry. They would lock me up there for two hours. . . ."

"But why?"

"I don't know. You see, the innkeepers were afraid of me. One day there was some laundry drying so they put me in the passage and the woman said . . . said . . ." He was sobbing.

"What did she say?"

"She said: One never knows with the spawn . . ." He was sobbing so hard that he could not go on.

" . . . the spawn?" repeated Antoine, bending over him.

" . . . the spawn . . . of thieves . . ." added the boy at last and he sobbed despairingly.

Antoine was listening. For the moment his curiosity was stronger than his pity.

"Well, then?" he said, "go on, tell me!"

Jacques stopped short and clung to his brother's arm:

"Antoine, Antoine," he shouted, "swear to me that you won't tell? Swear? If father ever suspected anything was wrong, he . . . father is really good, you know, he would be so unhappy! It is not his fault if he does not understand things as we do . . ." and suddenly: "Antoine, you . . . Don't leave me, Antoine, don't leave me!"

"No, Jacques, no, have confidence in me. . . . I won't tell anyone, I'll do anything you wish. Tell me the truth." And as Jacques could not make up his mind to go on: "He used to beat you?"

"Who?"

"Old Léon."

"No!" He was so surprised that he could not help smiling through his tears.

"Nobody beat you?"

"Certainly not!"

"Truly? Nobody, ever?"

"Of course not, nobody!"

"Well, then?"

Silence.

"And the new one, Arthur? He is not all right?"

Jacques shook his head.

"What is it? Does he go to the inn, too?"

"No."

"Do you walk with him?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, what is the matter with him? Is he mean to you?"

"No."

"Why don't you like him?"

"Because."

Antoine hesitated:

"But why in Heaven's name don't you explain?" he said at last. "Why don't you explain everything to the director?"

Jacques pressed his feverish body against Antoine and begged:

"No, no . . . Antoine, you have sworn to me, you know, you swore that you would not say anything. Anything to anybody!"

"All right, I'll do what you want. I am only asking you: Why did you not complain about old Léon to the director?"

Jacques shook his head, his teeth still clenched.

"Do you suppose that the director knew what was going on and winked at it?" Antoine suggested.

"Of course not."

"What do you think of the director?"

"Nothing."

"Do you think he makes the other children unhappy?"

"No, why?"

"He seems to be quite a decent sort, but I don't know what to think now. Old Leon also looked like a decent old man! Have you heard things against the director?"

"No."

"Are the guards afraid of him? And are they afraid of old Léon?"

"Yes, a little."

"Why?"

"I don't know. Because he is the director."

"But you, what about you, have you seen anything?"

"What do you mean?"

"When he comes to see you, how does he behave to you?"

"I don't know."

"You are afraid to speak frankly to him?"

"Yes."

"But if you had told him that old Léon went to the inn, instead of taking you out for a walk and that they locked you in a laundry, what do you think he would have done?"

"He would have dismissed old Léon!" answered Jacques, frightened.

"Well, what made you afraid of speaking to him?"

"What I told you!"

Antoine could not unravel the duplicities which he felt surrounded his brother and made him helpless.

"Don't you want to tell me what prevented you? Or rather, maybe you don't know yourself?" he asked.

"There are . . . drawings . . . which they forced me . . . to sign," whispered Jacques, looking at the ground. He hesitated, remained silent, then suddenly: "But that's not the only thing. You see, you can't tell anything to M. Faisme because he is the director. Don't you see?"

His voice was tired but sincere. Antoine did not insist. He did not trust himself for he knew he was always inclined to guess too quickly and too much.

"Well, at least," he went on, "you study a lot?"

They had arrived within sight of the lock near the barges and the small windows in the reformatory were already lighted. Jacques kept on walking, still looking down at his feet.

Antoine repeated:

"Is your work not going well, either?"

Jacques answered no without raising his head.

"And yet the director swears that your teacher is satisfied?"

"Because the teacher told him he was."

"But why should he say so, if it isn't true?"

Jacques looked as if it were difficult for him to follow all the questions.

"You see," he explained nonchalantly, "the teacher is old, he does not want me to do any work and comes because he has been told to come, that's all. He knows very well that nobody is going to check up on him. And he would rather have no lessons to correct. He stays an hour, we talk, we are very good comrades, he tells me all about Compiègne, about his pupils, about

everything. . . . He is not very happy, either. . . . He tells me all about his daughter who has some internal trouble and who quarrels with his wife because he has remarried, and all about his son who is a non-commissioned officer and who has lost his stripes because he got into debt on account of some woman. . . . We bluff with the books, the lessons, but we are not doing anything, really. . . ."

He stopped. Antoine could not find anything to say and felt rather ashamed before the boy who had already had such a large experience of life. Besides, he did not need to ask questions, for of his own accord the child had begun speaking again in a low and monotonous voice. His speech was so chaotic that one could not understand his association of ideas or what made him suddenly pour out everything after such an obstinate silence.

" . . . You know, it is the same thing about the water and wine. . . . I leave it for them. You understand. Old Léon asked for it. At first I did not care about it for I would just as soon drink water. What annoys me more than anything else is the fact that they spy in the passage all the time. With their felt soles I cannot hear them. Sometimes they frighten me. It is not that I am afraid, it is that I can't make a move without their seeing or hearing. . . . To be always alone and yet never really alone, you understand. Not when I'm walking nor anywhere! It seems nothing, I know, and yet in time you have no idea what it does to one, it is as if one were always on the point of fainting. . . . There are days when I should like to hide under the bed in order to cry. . . . No, not to cry, but to cry without being seen. Do you understand? . . . Just like your arrival this

morning. They told me about it in the chapel. The director sent his secretary to look at my clothes and they brought me my coat and my hat because I did not have them. . . . Don't think that they did it to deceive you, Antoine, it is the custom. Every first Monday of the month, when father comes for a meeting of the Board, they always do things like that, little things, to make father happy. It is just the same with the linen. What you saw this morning is the white linen which is always kept in the room to make it look nice if anyone comes. That does not mean that they leave me with dirty linen, no, they change it often enough and if I should ask for an extra clean towel . . . I'd get it. But they always do that, so that it looks better if anyone comes. . . .

"I ought not to tell you this, Antoine. You will go on believing things. I assure you that I have nothing to complain of. The regulations are not strict, and nothing is done to annoy me. And it is this kind of gentleness you see . . . And then to have nothing to do, to be tied down all day, with nothing, absolutely nothing to do. You have no idea how, at first, the days seemed very long, so long, and then I broke my watch spring and from that moment things have been better and slowly I have become accustomed to it. But I don't know how to express it, it is as if I went to sleep deep down in myself. . . . I do not suffer any more because it is just as if I were asleep, but it hurts all the same, you understand?"

He was silent again and then went on in a jerky voice, hesitating more and more:

"And then, Antoine, I can't tell you everything, but you know. . . . Alone as I am, one is apt to get a lot of ideas one should not have. . . . Especially as . . .

You see, old Léon's stories and . . . the drawings. . . . Well, you see it is a kind of recreation. I draw them during the day. . . . And during the night I think of them again. . . . I know very well I ought not to. . . . But alone, you see, you understand? Don't you? Oh, I am wrong in telling you all this. . . . I know that I'll be sorry. . . . But I am so tired this evening, if you knew. . . . I can't prevent myself from doing it. . . ." And suddenly he began crying desperately.

He felt, strangely enough, that he was lying in spite of himself, and that the more he tried to tell the truth the less he succeeded. And yet nothing he said was untrue, though by his tone, by the exaggeration of his suffering, by the choice of what he revealed, he was conscious that he was presenting a false image of his life. Yet he could not stop himself.

Antoine, while helping the boy along, was thinking hard. Not about what he had to do, for he had firmly made up his mind to get the boy out of the place! But he was seeking the means to get him to consent to it. It was not easy. When he opened his mouth Jacques hung upon his arm, sobbing, entreating him to remember his promise to say nothing, to do nothing.

"No, all right, dear, I won't do anything you don't wish. Only, listen to me, that moral solitude, that laziness, that promiscuity! And I who this morning thought you were happy!"

"But I am happy!" And in one second everything he had been complaining about disappeared. He only thought of the charms of his seclusion, the days' monotony, the idleness, the absence of control and his separation from his people.

"Happy? If you were really happy it would be shameful! You, no, my dear, I can't believe that you enjoy rotting in all that filth. You are degrading yourself and becoming an idiot. It has lasted too long already. I have promised not to act without your consent and I'll keep my word, don't worry. Let us think and look the facts in the face, you and I, like two friends. . . . Aren't we friends, now?"

"Yes."

"You trust me?"

"Yes."

"Well, then? What do you fear?"

"I don't want to go back to Paris!"

"But see here, my dear, after what you have described as your life here, family life can't be much worse!"

"Oh, yes!"

And Antoine, horrified at this outcry, remained silent.

His perplexity grew. "God!" he kept saying to himself, unable to think of anything to do. Time was slipping by. It seemed to him that he was walking in darkness. Suddenly the veil was drawn aside. He had a solution! In one second a whole plan took shape in his head. He started to laugh.

"Jacques!" he said, "listen to me and don't interrupt or rather answer me: if we were left alone, you and I, alone in the world, would you not come to me, to live with me?"

The child did not answer at once.

"Oh, Antoine!" he said at last, "how could that be? Father is there. . . ."

Their father stood in the way of the future. The same thought came to both of them: "How much

simpler everything would be, if, suddenly . . ." Antoine was ashamed of his thought as soon as he saw it reflected in his brother's eyes, and turned away.

"Oh, of course," Jacques was saying, "if I could be with you, with you only, I would be quite different. . . . I would work, I might become a real poet. . . ."

Antoine stopped him with a gesture:

"Well, listen, if I gave you my word of honor that nobody except myself would look after you, would you agree to leave this place?"

"Yes. . . . Yes." He said it only because he was fond of his brother and thought it easier to agree with him.

"Would you let me organize your life, your studies, watch over you as if you were my son?"

"Yes."

"All right," said Antoine, and became silent, thinking. His desires were always so powerful that he never doubted his ability to make them become realities and as a matter of fact, he had always succeeded in securing what he had really wanted. He turned to his young brother and smiled:

"I am not dreaming," he went on, in a resolute voice and still smiling. "I know what I am letting myself in for. In a fortnight, do you hear, within a fortnight. . . . Trust me! You are going back to that hole, courageously, as if nothing had happened, and within two weeks, I swear to you, you'll be free!"

Jacques did not listen very closely but drew closer to his brother in a sudden longing for affection.

"Trust me!" Antoine repeated.

He himself felt comforted and noble and was pleased because he was happy and strong. He was comparing his life with Jacques's. "Poor little devil, things are

always happening to him which would happen to nobody else!" He wanted to say, "such things as never have happened before to anybody!" He was pitying the boy, but felt an exquisite pleasure in being Antoine, a normal person, well equipped to be happy, to become a great man, a great doctor. He felt as if he wanted to quicken his step and to whistle, but Jacques was dragging along looking exhausted and also they were reaching Crouy.

"Trust me!" he whispered once more, pressing Jacques's arm under his.

M. Faisme was smoking his cigar outside the gate and hopped towards them as soon as he spied them in the distance.

"Well, I say! You did take a walk! I'll bet you went to Compiègne." He laughed delightedly and held out his hand. "Along the river? What a pretty road it is. The country around here is very beautiful, isn't it?" He took out his watch: "I don't want to order you about, Doctor, but if you don't want to miss your train again. . . ."

"I shall fly," said Antoine. He turned to his brother and his voice was full of feeling:

"Good-by, Jacques."

Night was falling. By the light behind him he saw a passive face with tired eyelids and eyes looking far away. He repeated:

"Good-by!"

Arthur was waiting for Jacques in the courtyard. He wanted to say good-night to the director, but M. Faisme had turned his back to him, and was putting the bars on the gate as he did every evening. Through

the noise made by the dog barking, Jacques heard Arthur's voice:

"Well, are you coming?"

He followed him.

He was happy to be back in his cell again. Antoine's chair was there beside the table. The affection of his older brother enveloped him still. He put on his working clothes. His body was tired but his brain was active. There was in him, besides the everyday Jacques, another being, immaterial, born to-day, who looked at what the first was doing and dominated it.

Unwilling to sit down, he walked up and down the room. A new and powerful feeling made him restless, the consciousness of a certain power within him. He went to the door and he remained there, his forehead on the window-pane, looking at the lamp in the empty passage. The suffocating heat of the stove intensified his fatigue. He was nearly asleep. Suddenly a shadow appeared on the other side of the pane. The locked door was open. Arthur was bringing his dinner.

"Well, hurry up, good-for-nothing!"

Before starting on his lentils, Jacques took out of the tray the piece of Gruyere cheese and the mug filled with water and wine.

"For me?" said the servant. He smiled, took the piece of cheese and went to eat it near the wardrobe so that he could not be seen from the door. It was the time just before dinner when M. Faisme in slippers generally made his rounds and very often one knew of his visit only after he had gone by through the nauseating smell from his cigar, which came through the screen of the transom.

Jacques finished his bread by dipping big crumbs

in the black liquid from the lentils. "Now to your bed," said Arthur as soon as he had finished.

"But it is not eight o'clock yet!"

"Hurry up! It is Sunday and my pals are waiting for me."

Jacques began undressing without answering. Arthur, with his hands in his pockets, was looking at him. His somewhat brutish face and his sturdy body, like a piano-mover's, were rather attractive.

"Your brother," he said slowly, "is a man who knows what's what!" He made a gesture as if he were putting a coin in his vest pocket, smiled, took the empty tray and went out.

Jacques was in bed when he came back.

"What, already?" With the toe of his boot the servant pushed the shoes under the washstand. "Say, can't you put your things away properly before going to bed?" He went closer. "Do you hear, you little vermin?" He put his hand on Jacques's shoulder and laughed queerly. A more and more painful smile twisted the child's face. "You are not hiding anything? No candle? No book?" He put his hand under the sheets. But with a movement that Arthur could neither foresee nor prevent, the boy broke away and threw himself back against the wall. His eyes were full of hatred.

"Well, well," said the man, "you are very touchy to-night!" He added: "I also can tell tales. . . ."

He was speaking in low tones and watching the passage. Then, without paying any more attention to Jacques, he lighted the lamp which remained lit for the night watch, turned off the electricity and went out whistling.

Jacques heard the key turn twice and the man going

away dragging his cord slippers along the passage. Then he came back to the middle of the bed, stretched out his legs and remained on his back. His teeth were chattering and all confidence had left him. He thought of what he had confided to Antoine and had a violent outburst of rage followed by such despair that he was almost torn in two. He could see Paris, Antoine, his father's house, discussions, work, family restrictions. . . . He had committed an irreparable mistake. He had delivered himself into his enemies' hands! "What do they all want of me, what do they all want?" The tears ran down his cheeks. He held on to the thought that Antoine's mysterious plan was unworkable, that M. Thibault would be opposed to it. His father appeared to him in the guise of a savior. Yes, all that would fail and he would be left where he was. There he had solitude, quiet. There is happiness in peace.

Upon the ceiling the reflection of the night light went round and round above his head.

He had peace and happiness.

IV

ANTOINE met his father's secretary on the gloomy staircase. M. Chasle, who was gliding down like a rat, stopped when he saw Antoine looking quite frightened.

"Hello! There you are?" He had acquired from his employer a mania for apostrophizing people. "Bad news!" he whispered. "The University crowd has put forward the candidature of the Dean of the Faculty of Letters, that means at least fifteen votes lost and with the lawyer's it will be twenty-five. What? That's really bad luck. The Boss will explain it all to you." He was coughing all the time, dry small coughs due to shyness, though he believed he was suffering from a chronic catarrh and sucked gum drops all day long. "I have to rush away, mother must be getting uneasy," he went on, seeing that Antoine did not answer. He took out his watch, listened to it before looking at the time, pulled up his collar and vanished.

For the last seven years this small spectacled man had been in the employ of M. Thibault and Antoine hardly knew him better than on his first day. He seldom spoke and then always in a low tone expressing only conventional opinions and always piling up synonyms. He was punctual and fussy, lived with his mother, was full of tender attentions to her and his boots always creaked. His Christian name was Jules,

but M. Thibault, out of consideration for his own position, called his secretary "Monsieur Chasle." Antoine and Jacques had nicknamed him "Gum Drop" or "The Bore."

Antoine went straight to his father's study. M. Thibault was tidying his desk before going to bed.

"Ah! There you are! Bad news!"

"Yes," interrupted Antoine, "Monsieur Chasle told me."

M. Thibault drew his chin out of his collar. He did not like to have his remarks anticipated, but Antoine did not care just then for he was thinking of what he wanted to accomplish and felt much embarrassed. He conquered his diffidence and went straight to the point.

"I also have very bad news. Jacques cannot remain at Crouy." He stopped for breath and went on rapidly: "I have just come from there. I saw him, I talked to him, I found dreadful things. I came to talk things over with you. We must get him out of the place as soon as possible."

M. Thibault remained silent for a few moments. His amazement was discernible only in his voice:

"You? To Crouy? You? When? What for? Without telling me? Are you mad? Explain yourself."

Although glad he had had his say at once Antoine was ill at ease and could not speak. There was a painful silence. M. Thibault opened his eyes and shut them involuntarily. Then he sat down and laid his fists upon his desk.

"Explain yourself, young man," he went on, emphasizing every syllable: "You say you have been to Crouy? When?"

"To-day."

"How? With whom?"

"Alone."

"Were you received?"

"Naturally."

"Were you . . . allowed to see your brother?"

"I spent the whole day with him. Alone with him."

Antoine had a provoking way of making the final words of each sentence ring at the end, which acted as a whip to M. Thibault's anger but warned him that he would have to be careful.

"You are no longer a child," he began, as if he were judging Antoine's age by the tone of his voice. "You must see how improper it is to make such an investigation behind my back. Did you have some specific reason for going to Crouy without telling me first? Did your brother write to you and ask for you to come?"

"No, my mind was suddenly filled with doubts."

"Doubts? About what?"

"About everything . . . about the discipline, the effects of the discipline Jacques has undergone for the last eight months."

"Well, really, my dear boy, you . . . surprise me!"

He was hesitating, choosing moderate words which did not go with the way he was clenching his hands. "This mistrust of your father."

"Everybody can be mistaken. The proof is . . . !"

"The proof?"

"Listen, father, it is no use getting angry. I believe we both want the same thing, Jacques's welfare. When you know in what a state of decadence I found him you'll be the first to decide that Jacques must leave the reformatory as soon as possible."

"No!"

Antoine tried not to hear his father's sneering laugh.

"Yes, father."

"And I tell you, no!"

"Father, when you know . . ."

"Do you take me for an idiot? Do you suppose that I have been waiting for your information to find out what is going on at Crouy, which for the last ten years I have inspected regularly once a month? Nothing is done there that has not first been discussed at a meeting of the Board of which I am the President."

"Father, what I have seen there . . ."

"That's enough! Your brother may have told you all kinds of lies. You are easy game! But with me it will be a different matter."

"Jacques did not complain about anything."

M. Thibault was a little taken aback.

"Well, then? What is the matter?" he asked.

"On the contrary, the awful thing is that he says he leads a quiet life, he even says he is happy and that he likes it there!" And as M. Thibault chuckled in satisfaction Antoine said in a very cutting way: "The poor boy has such memories of family life that he prefers his prison!"

The insult went wide of the mark:

"Well, then, everything is all right. We are all agreed. What more do you want?"

Antoine was not certain now that he would obtain Jacques's freedom so he did not tell all he had learned through the child's confidences. He decided to state the less startling facts and to keep the rest to himself.

"I am going to tell you the truth, father," he began. looking keenly at M. Thibault. "I had suspected privations, bad treatment, cells. Yes, I know. For-

tunately, I was wrong about that, but I saw in Jacques's life a spiritual misery a hundred times worse. People deceive you when they tell you that isolation does him good, for the cure is much more dangerous than the disease. His days are spent in harmful idleness. He won't talk about his teacher. The truth is that Jacques does nothing and it is evident that his mind is becoming incapable of the slightest effort. To go on with such a punishment, believe me, is to put his future in jeopardy. He has come to such a state of indifference and he is so weak that if he remains a few months longer in that lethargy it will be too late for him to ever regain his health."

Antoine kept looking at his father while he talked, trying the power of his eyes on that immovable face and watching for a sign of acquiescence. M. Thibault was hunched in his chair and kept a massive immobility, making one think of the pachydermous animals whose power is hidden as long as they are at rest, for he had wide flat ears and at times his eyes were full of cunning, just like an elephant's. Antoine's plea reassured him. Recently there had been some rumors of scandal at the Foundation, some guards had had to be dismissed and the reason for their dismissal had not been made public. For an instant M. Thibault had feared that Antoine's revelations were of that kind, but he breathed freely again.

"Do you think that you are telling me anything new?" he said benevolently. "Everything you say, my dear boy, is a proof of your natural generosity, but allow me to tell you frankly that all these questions of punishment are very involved and that one does not become competent in such matters overnight. Believe in my experience and that of the specialists in reform.

You talk about weakness and lethargy. Thank God! You know what your brother was like. Do you think one can break such a will for wrongdoing without subduing it first? In weakening a vicious child you weaken also his bad instincts, so one can master him. Practice teaches one that. And you see your brother has been transformed. He is not subject any more to violent outbursts of anger and he is well disciplined and polite towards all those who come into contact with him. You say yourself that he has already come to love the order and the regularity of his new life. Well, after all, ought we not to be proud of such a result in less than a year?"

With his sausage-like fingers he was stroking the tip of his beard and when he had finished speaking he looked sideways at his son. His good voice and magnificent delivery gave great force to anything he might say, and Antoine was so accustomed to being bluffed by his father that he weakened inwardly. But M. Thibault's pride caused him to make a mistake:

"And after all, I wonder why I take the trouble to defend the expediency of an action which is not and never will be questioned. I do what I believe is right, conscientiously, and I have no accounts to render to anyone. Please remember that, my boy."

Antoine rebelled:

"That's not the way to impose silence upon me, father! I repeat to you that Jacques must not remain at Crouy."

M. Thibault laughed his harsh laugh again. Antoine tried to keep calm.

"Father, it would be a crime to leave Jacques down there. There is something worth while in him that we must not allow to be lost. Let me tell you, father,

you have often been mistaken about him and his ways, he annoys you and you don't see his. . . ."

"What do I not see? We live quietly here since he left. Isn't that true? Well, when he has been well punished, we'll see about having him back. Until then . . ." His fist went up in the air as if he were going to bring it down upon the table with all his strength; instead he opened his hand and laid it flat on the desk. His anger was smoldering. Antoine burst out:

"I swear that Jacques won't stay long at Crouy, Father!"

"Well, well . . ." said M. Thibault in a very ironical tone. "Don't you think you forget that you are not the master here?"

"No, certainly not, that's why I am asking you, what are you going to do?"

"I?" said M. Thibault slowly. He smiled coldly and opened his eyes for a second: "I have no doubt about that at all. First of all I shall censure M. Faisme severely for having admitted you without my permission and then I shall forbid you admission in the future."

Antoine folded his arms:

"So, all your pamphlets, all your lectures, all your fine words are for Congresses only. The disintegration of a mind, even if it is your own son's, does not matter! You don't want any complications and you wish to live in peace, let happen what may?"

"Deceiver!" shouted M. Thibault. He stood up. "Yes, it had to happen. I saw it coming a long time ago. Certain words which escaped you at meal time, your books, your newspapers. . . . Your slackness in fulfilling your religious principles, after that moral anarchy and then to crown all, revolt!"

Antoine shrugged his shoulders.

"Don't let us get things mixed. The boy is the question and it is urgent. Father, promise me that Jacques . . ."

"From now on I forbid you to speak of him to me! Is that clear enough now?"

They glared at each other.

"That's your last word?"

"Go away!"

"Oh, father, you don't know me," said Antoine with a laugh full of defiance. "I swear to you Jacques will get out of that prison! And that to accomplish my aim I'll stop at nothing, at nothing!"

With a sudden violence the fat man turned towards his son and said between his clenched teeth:

"Get out!"

Antoine had opened the door. He turned back upon the threshold to hurl at him in a hollow voice:

"At nothing! Even if I have to launch a campaign in *my* newspaper!"

V

EARLY the next day Antoine, who had been unable to sleep, was waiting in a vestry of the Archbishop's palace till Abbé Vécard had finished his mass. The priest must be told everything so that he would be able to intervene. That was Jacques's last chance.

The interview lasted a long time. The priest made the young man sit beside him as for a confession and listened to him carefully, his body thrown backwards, his head inclined towards his left shoulder as was his wont. He did not interrupt Antoine once. His colorless face with its long nose was expressionless, but from time to time he looked at Antoine tenderly and searchingly as if trying to find out the things that were beyond words. Although he knew Antoine less than the other members of his family, he had a great regard for him, the amusing part being that he was influenced by M. Thibault's attitude, whose vanity was tickled by Antoine's success and who loved praising his son.

Antoine did not try to convince the priest by clever arguments but described to him in detail the day he had spent in Crouy and his interview with his father. The Abbé silently chided him for that by a significant gesture of his hands which he always held upon his chest. They were the kind of hands one would expect a prelate to have. These hands fell languidly from rounded wrists and they were so expressive that it seemed as if

nature had given to them the faculty it had denied to his face.

"Jacques's fate is now in your hands," concluded Antoine. "You are the only one who can make my father listen to reason."

The Abbé did not answer. He turned towards Antoine such dull, uninterested eyes that the young man did not know what to think. He felt then how powerless he really was and the enormous difficulties of his undertaking.

"Well," said the priest gently, "and then?"

"Then?"

"Suppose your father allows Jacques to come back to Paris, what would he do with him?"

Antoine did not know what to say. He had his plans but he was at sea how to explain them. The main idea would hardly appeal to the Abbé, to leave the family, to settle in an apartment on the ground floor, for it meant removing the child from paternal supervision and taking entire charge of him, looking after his conduct and his work. The priest could not help smiling at Antoine's notion but his smile was not ironical.

"You would assume a very heavy responsibility, my friend."

"Well," replied Antoine with enthusiasm, "my conviction is that the boy needs a great deal of freedom and that he will never develop properly if he is restrained! You can laugh at me, but I am sure that if I alone were to look after him . . ."

The priest shook his head again and looked penetratingly and fixedly at him. His glance came from afar and seemed to reach further still. Antoine went away full of despair. The casual attitude of the priest following his father's angry refusal did not leave him

much hope. He would have been very much surprised had he known that the priest had decided to go to see M. Thibault that very day.

He did not have to disturb himself.

When he went back as he did every day after his mass to drink a cup of cold milk in the apartment he occupied with his sister, a stone's throw from the Archbishopric, he saw M. Thibault waiting for him in the dining-room. The fat man sat limply in a chair, his hands in his lap and still nursing his anger.

"Ah! there you are," he grumbled. "Does my visit surprise you?"

"Not so much as you suppose," replied the Abbé. Sometimes a fugitive smile or a malicious glance brightened up his calm face. "My detectives are good. I know everything. Will you allow me?" he added, going to the bowl of milk standing on the table.

"You know? Have you already seen . . . ?"

The priest was drinking his milk slowly.

"Through the Duchess I knew yesterday morning the state of Astier's health but it was only last night that I heard of the withdrawal of your competitor."

"Astier's health! Is he . . . ? I don't understand. I know nothing."

"Really?" said the priest. "Then I am to have the pleasure of telling you the happy news?" He paused a moment. "Well, old man Astier has had his fourth stroke and this time the poor old man is done for. And the Dean, who is rather a clever man, withdraws and leaves you as the only candidate to the seat of Moral Sciences."

"The Dean . . . withdraws?" stammered M. Thibault. "Why?"

"Because he thought that the Dean of the Faculty of Letters would have a better chance for a seat in the *Inscription,* so that he would rather wait a few weeks for a seat nobody will dispute with him than to risk his chance against yours!"

"Are you quite sure?"

"It is known officially. I met the Secretary at a meeting of the Catholic Institute last night. The Dean himself had just submitted his letter of withdrawal. His candidature has lasted less than twenty-four hours!"

"But then . . . !" sputtered M. Thibault. Surprise and joy were choking him. He walked a few steps purposelessly, his arms behind his back, then came back to the priest and almost seized him by the shoulders. He took his hands.

"My dear Abbé, I shall never forget this. Thank you, thank you."

So much happiness had come to him that everything else was forgotten. His anger was cooling, so much so that he had to make an effort to answer when the priest, having taken him unawares into his study, asked very naturally:

"But what did bring you here so early then, my dear friend?"

Then he remembered Antoine and at once he was angry again. He had come to ask what his attitude should be towards his eldest son, who had changed lately and who seemed to be animated by a spirit of doubt and rebellion. Did he still continue his religious duties? Did he still go to Sunday mass? He came less and less to take his meals at home, using as a pretext his patients and when he came his attitude was quite different from what it used to be. He would argue

against his father and he entertained extreme opinions. At the time of the municipal elections the discussions had become so bitter at times that he had had to impose silence, as if Antoine were still a boy. In brief, if Antoine were to be put on the right path again, it was urgent that new methods be adopted towards him and Abbé Vécard's help and perhaps even his intervention would be indispensable. As an example, M. Thibault told of the undisciplined act of which Antoine had been guilty in going to Crouy, of the stupid ideas he had brought back and of the preposterous scene it had caused. However, his respect for Antoine was greater because of the very acts of independence of which he disapproved and his increased respect could be felt in his words. The Abbé took note of it.

He sat unconcerned at his desk, giving signs of approval from time to time with his hands lifted on each side of his white clerical tie. But as soon as Jacques was mentioned he was all attention. Through a series of skillful questions which seemed to have no connection with one another, he made the father confirm all the information the son had just given him.

"Well . . . well . . . well!" he said, as if he were speaking to himself. He thought for a few moments while M. Thibault waited expectantly. Then with great firmness the priest said: "What you tell me about Antoine does not worry me as much as it does you, my dear friend. It was to be expected. The first effect of scientific studies upon an eager and investigating mind is to exalt pride and to weaken faith. With a little knowledge the belief in God disappears, but with a great deal the belief comes back. Don't worry. Antoine is at the age when one goes from one extreme to the other. You did right in warning me and I'll do

my best to see him oftener and to talk with him. But all that is not very serious, only have patience and he'll come back to us.

"But what you have just told me about Jacques's life worries me far more. I had no idea he was so completely cut off from comradeship! He is leading a prisoner's life! I can't believe that such a life is without danger. My dear friend, I must tell you I am very upset about it. Have you really given it serious consideration?"

M. Thibault smiled.

"My dear Abbé, with all my conscience. I'll tell you what I told Antoine yesterday. Don't you think that I have as much experience in such matters as anybody?"

"I don't deny it," said the priest good-humoredly. "But the children with whom you usually have to deal do not need the care necessary for your son's special temperament. And their régime is different, since, if I understood correctly, they live together, they have time to play and they try their hands at some trade. I was, you remember, in favor of a very severe punishment for Jacques and this make-believe seclusion seemed to be exactly the thing to make him think and to improve him. But, goodness gracious, I never thought that it would be a real incarceration, and above all, that it would last so long. Think of it! For the last eight months, a child hardly fifteen years old, alone, in a cell, in the keeping of a guard without education and of whose character you have only official information! It's true he does some lessons. But this teacher from Compiègne who gives him altogether three or four hours a week, what does he amount to? You don't know? And you put forward your experi-

ence! Allow me to recall to you the fact that I have lived for twelve years with schoolboys and that I am not quite ignorant of what a boy of fifteen is like. The state of moral and physical ruin in which he is, without you knowing anything about it, is appalling!"

"So, you also?" replied M. Thibault. "I thought your mind was stronger," he added with a dry little laugh. "And, moreover, I am not talking about Jacques. . . ."

"There is nothing else for me to talk about," interrupted the priest without raising his voice. "After what I have just heard I am sure that the moral and physical welfare of the child are in jeopardy." He appeared to think and then said very clearly and slowly: "—and that he must not remain a day longer where he is."

"What?" said M. Thibault.

There was a silence. Twice in twelve hours M. Thibault had been hurt in his most vulnerable spot. Rage was getting the better of him, but he restrained himself:

"All right, we'll talk about that again," he conceded, and straightened himself up.

"Pardon me, pardon me," said the priest with an unexpected vivacity. "The least one can say is that you have acted imprudently . . . and that you were wrong." He had a firm and gentle way of drawling certain words without his face becoming animated in the least and of putting his forefinger at the same time to his lips as if to say: Attention! which he did in repeating: "Very wrong!" Then, after a pause. "This wrong must be righted as soon as possible."

"What? What do you want of me?" shouted M. Thibault, who by this time had let himself go. He

turned aggressively to the priest. "Am I going to stop without any reason whatsoever a method which has already given excellent results? Take back the scamp in my house? To be exposed again to his escapades? No, thank you!" He held his fists shut so tight that he made his knuckles crack and his clenched jaw strangled his voice: "In all conscience, I say no, no and no!"

With his two hands the priest made a calm gesture which meant: "Just as you like."

M. Thibault rose with an effort. Once again Jacques's fate was decided.

"My dear Abbé," he went on, "I see that it is impossible to have a serious talk with you this morning so I am going. But let me tell you that like Antoine you let your imagination run away with you. Do I look like an unnatural father? Did I not do everything I could to bring the child back to the right path through affection, good example, indulgence, and the influence of family life? Did I not endure for years as much as any father can bear? Will you deny that all my solicitude was in vain? Luckily, I saw in time that my duty was different and however painful it was for me I did not hesitate to punish. You approved then. God has given me some experience and I have always thought that in giving me the idea to found that house at Crouy, Providence had allowed me to get ready beforehand for the cure of a personal disease. Have I not borne my cross courageously? Have I anything with which to reproach myself? Thank God, my conscience is at rest," he asserted, while an inward protestation made him lower his voice slightly. "I wish for all fathers a conscience as peaceful as mine! And with that I am going."

He opened the door and a satisfied smile appeared on his countenance. His accent became sarcastic and then it was not without salt. It reminded one of his native Norman soil.

"It is a lucky thing that my head is better balanced than yours and Antoine's," he said.

He walked through the hall followed by the silent priest.

"Well, I'll see you soon, my dear friend," he said gruffly as soon as he was on the landing.

He turned to shake hands with the Abbé when unexpectedly:

"Two men went up into the temple to pray," began the priest in a dreary voice. "The one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men. I fast twice in the week, I give to the poor tithes of all I possess. The publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful unto me a sinner."

M. Thibault opened his eyes a little: he saw his confessor, standing in the darkness of the hall, his forefinger to his lips:

"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

The fat man received the shock without moving an eyelash and stood there with closed eyes. As the silence continued he looked again but the priest had closed the door noiselessly. He shrugged his shoulders, turned upon his heels and went away. But, on the stairs between the two floors, he stopped, his hand

grasping the banister tightly, his breathing labored. He thrust his chin forward like a horse annoyed by its bit.

"No," he mumbled.

And, hesitating no longer, he went home.

All day he kept trying to forget what had happened. But, in the afternoon, when M. Chasle did not give him quickly enough the file which he needed, he had a moment of frenzied rage which he had great trouble in repressing. Antoine was on duty at the hospital. Dinner was silent. Without waiting for Gisèle to finish her dessert, M. Thibault folded his napkin and went back to his study.

Eight o'clock struck. "I would have time to go back there to-night," he thought, sitting down, having resolved to do nothing of the kind. "He would talk again about Jacques and I said No. It is No."

"But what did he mean by his Pharisee's story?" he asked himself for the hundredth time. Suddenly his lower lip began to tremble. M. Thibault had always been afraid of death. He stood up and above the bronzes which encumbered the mantelpiece, he searched his features in the mirror. His face had lost that satisfied look which had little by little molded it and which never left him even when alone or praying. A shudder went through him. With rounded shoulders he sat down heavily again in his chair. He could see himself on his deathbed and he was wondering and afraid that he might, after all, be empty-handed. He depended desperately on other people's opinion of him: "I am a good man," he kept telling himself, but his tone was interrogative. He could not deceive himself any longer with words, for he was having one of those

rare moments when introspection goes to depths it has never dared to explore before. His hands clutching the arms of his chair, he was brooding over his life and he could not see one act which was disinterested. Poignant memories came up to him from depths into which they had sunk. One of them, more painful than all the others put together, was so vivid that he put his head between his hands. For the first time in his life, perhaps, M. Thibault was ashamed. At last he knew that supreme disgust with oneself, so intolerable that no sacrifice seems too dear, as long as it brings a rehabilitation which will buy forgiveness, and which will bring back to the desolate peace and the hope of eternal salvation. To find God again. . . . But first he had to regain the esteem of the priest, God's representative. . . . Yes . . . he could not live one hour longer in this cursed isolation, under his reprobation. . . .

The fresh air calmed him. He took a carriage in order to arrive more quickly. Abbé Vécard opened the door himself. His face, lighted by the lamp which he raised to recognize the visitor, was expressionless.

"Here I am," said M. Thibault; he held out his hand mechanically and they went silently to the study. "I have not come to talk about Jacques," he declared at once, as soon as he sat down. And as the priest made a conciliatory gesture: "Believe me, don't let us come back to that, you are wrong. And if you feel like it, go to Crouy and see for yourself. You'll see I am right." Then, in a brusque but naïve manner: "Please excuse my bad humor this morning. You know me. I am very quick tempered, I don't . . . But at bottom . . . you know, about the Pharisee, you were unnecessarily harsh. Too harsh. By Heavens, I have the

right to protest! You know that for the last thirty years I have given to Catholic works all my time, all my energy, better still, the greater part of my income. And I have lived to hear a priest, a friend of mine tell me that I . . . that I . . . No, you can see for yourself, it is not fair!"

The Abbé looked at his penitent. He seemed to say: "Pride shows in spite of yourself even in the least word you utter. . . ."

There was a rather long pause.

"My dear Abbé," went on M. Thibault in a trembling voice, "I admit that I am not quite . . . Yes, I agree that too often, I . . . but it is my nature to be thus. . . . Don't you know what I am like?" He wanted a little indulgence. "The way to salvation is hard. . . . You are the only one who can direct me and lift me up.

"I am getting old, I am afraid . . ." he mumbled suddenly.

The Abbé was deeply moved by the change in his voice. He felt he would have to break his silence and he brought his chair closer.

"I am the person who hesitates now," he said, "and, my dear friend, what more can I say, since the Holy Scriptures struck so deep?" He meditated an instant: "I know that God has given you a difficult position. In working for Him you acquire authority and honors. That is as it should be and how can you help confusing his glory and yours? I know that . . ."

M. Thibault had opened his eyes and kept them opened; he had on his pale face a frightened expression both childish and innocent.

"And yet!" went on the Abbé. *"Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam.* That is the only thing of importance and all

the rest is vain. You belong, my dear friend, to the race of the strong, that is to say to the proud. I know how difficult it is to hold that force of pride within the limits of good sense! I know it is hard not to live for oneself, not to forget God, even when one is occupied with pious works! It is hard not to be one of those of whom our Lord once said sadly: 'The people praise me with their lips but their hearts are not with me!' "

"Yes," said M. Thibault with exaltation, without lowering his head, "it is awful. . . . I am the only one who really knows how awful it is!"

He felt a delicious sensation in humiliating himself thus. He felt vaguely that he could recover the priest's good-will by it without having to give in about the reformatory. An instinct urged him to do still more, to astonish the Abbé and show how deep his faith was by being unexpectedly generous. He had to get his self-respect back at any price.

"Abbé Vécard!" he said suddenly, and his face took on that uncompromising expression that Antoine assumed so frequently. "If up to now I have been a poor man full of pride, does not God offer me to-day an occasion for . . . making amends?"

He hesitated and appeared to be struggling with himself as indeed he was. The priest saw him making with his thumb a rapid sign of the cross on his waistcoat, over his heart. "I mean, the candidature, you understand? It would be a real sacrifice and a sacrifice of pride since you announced to me this morning that my election is assured. . . . Well, I . . . Here, you see, there is vanity even in that, don't you think I ought to hold my tongue and do it without speaking about it, even to you? But no matter. Well, Abbé

Vécard, I swear I'll withdraw to-morrow and for all time my candidature to the Institute."

The Abbé made a gesture with his hands which M. Thibault did not see, as he was turned towards the crucifix hanging on the wall.

"My God," he mumbled, "have pity upon me, a poor miserable sinner."

Even into these words he put a self-satisfaction which he did not suspect himself. Pride has deep roots and in spite of his real repentance, he was enormously proud of his humility. The Abbé looked at him penetratingly. Up to what point was the man sincere? However, at that minute, M. Thibault's face was so radiant with renunciation and mysticism that one could not see the puffiness or the wrinkles. The old man's face looked as innocent as a child's. The priest was very upset. He was ashamed of the mean satisfaction which had been his when he had confounded the fat publican. The rôles were reversed. He looked back upon his own life. Was it really only for the glory of God that he had left his pupils in such a hurry, that he had intrigued for this place in the Archbishopric to be near the influential men there? And did he not enjoy daily a guilty pleasure in the diplomatic tact he was using for the good of the Church?

"On your conscience, do you think God will forgive me?"

This anxious voice recalled to Abbé Vécard his functions as a spiritual adviser. He crossed his hands under his chin, bent his head and forced himself to smile.

"I have let you go to the bitter end," he said. "I have let you drink the cup to the dregs. I am sure Divine forgiveness will take this hour into account. But," he added, raising his forefinger, "the intention

is enough and your real duty is not to go through with the sacrifice. Don't protest. I, your confessor, release you from your vow. Really, your renunciation would be less to the Glory of God than your election. Your fortune and the standing your membership in the Institute will confer upon you, among the great republicans of the Extreme-Left who are the safeguard of our country, a new authority that we deem necessary to the good cause. At all times you have known how to intrust your life to the Church. Well, let the Church, once more, through my ministry, show you the way. Christ refuses to accept your sacrifice. My dear friend, submit, however hard it may be! *Gloria in excelsis! Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"*

The Abbé, while speaking, saw M. Thibault's features grow firm again and slowly regain their composure. When he had finished the fat man had shut his eyes once more and it was impossible to know what he was thinking. By giving him back the seat in the Institute, his ambition for twenty years, the priest had given back life to him. But he still felt battered by the severe struggle he had had with his lower nature and full of boundless gratitude. They had the same thought at the same time and the priest inclined his head and began saying in an undertone a prayer of thankfulness. When he looked up again, M. Thibault was upon his knees and his blindman's face raised toward heaven was lighted up with joy, his wet lips were muttering and on the desk his two hairy hands, so puffy that they looked as if they had been stung by wasps, were crossed with touching fervor. Why was the edifying spectacle suddenly unbearable to the priest? So much so that he involuntarily put forward his arm to

push his penitent over. He modified his gesture at once and laid his hand affectionately upon M. Thibault's shoulder. M. Thibault rose heavily.

"Everything has not been said yet," said the priest then with the inflexible gentleness which was peculiarly his own. "You'll have to make a decision about Jacques."

M. Thibault stiffened at once.

The priest sat down. "You must not be like those who think that because they have accomplished a difficult duty and neglected the ordinary one that is nearer to them that they have done something. Even if the ordeal to which you have submitted the child is not as harmful as I fear, do not prolong it. Think of the servant who buried the talent his Master had confided to him. Please, my friend, do not leave without having faced all your responsibilities."

M. Thibault remained standing. He shook his head but did not look obstinate any more. The priest rose.

"The most important point, of course," he murmured, "is that Antoine must not get the idea you are giving in to him." He saw that he had guessed right, walked a few steps and said suddenly in a very airy manner: "Do you know what I would do if I were you, my dear friend? I would tell Antoine: 'You wish your brother to leave the reformatory? Yes? You are still keen about it? Well, I take you at your word, go and get him! But keep him! You want him to come back? Well, look after him!' "

M. Thibault did not move. The priest went on:

"I would go further even, I would tell him: 'I don't want Jacques in the house. Arrange things just as you like. You always seem to think that I don't know how to manage him. Well, you try!' and I would put his

brother in his keeping. I would install them both, somewhere—near you, of course, so that they would partake of your meals, but I would leave him in Antoine's hands. Don't interrupt me, my dear friend," he added, although M. Thibault had not moved, "wait, let me finish, my idea is not as odd as it seems. . . ."

He came back to his desk, sat down and rested his elbows on it:

"Please follow closely what I am going to say:

"Firstly. It is safe to surmise that Jacques will accept his brother's authority better than yours and I am ready to believe that if he enjoyed greater freedom, he would lose the spirit of rebellion against discipline which he has had.

"Secondly. As far as Antoine is concerned his earnestness offers you all guarantees. If taken at his word, I am convinced he won't refuse the means of freeing his brother. And as for the tendencies of which we spoke this morning, small causes may have big effects. My idea is that by burdening him with the responsibility of a human being, you will give him the best counterweight and a less anarchical conception of society, morality and religion.

"Thirdly. Your paternal authority would not be exposed to daily conflicts which weaken and divide it and so would keep all its prestige. You would thus be able, from your high place, to direct your two sons, which is the privilege and special purpose of a father's power.

"And finally" (here his tone became very confidential) "I must tell you that at the moment of your election it seems advisable to me that Jacques should have left Crouy, so that nothing can be said about it. Notoriety brings in its wake all kind of interviews and

inquiries and you would be at the mercy of the indiscretion of the press. . . . Quite a secondary consideration, I know, but . . ."

M. Thibault showed some uneasiness. Though unwilling to admit it, this release would liberate his conscience, and the priest's arrangement had only advantages since he kept his self-respect in dealing with Antoine, brought back Jacques to a normal life and at the same time would not have to bother about the child.

"If I were perfectly sure," he said at last, "that once the scamp was released he would not get mixed up in another scandal . . ."

This time the priest had won the game.

The Abbé promised to control discreetly the activities of the two boys during the first few months at least. Then he accepted an invitation to dinner for the next day so that he could be present at the talk the father was going to have with his eldest son.

M. Thibault rose to go. He was going away with a happy soul, a new soul. However, in shaking warmly the hands of his confessor a doubt crossed his mind.

"May God forgive me for being as I am," he said sadly.

The priest looked at him with a happy expression and said:

"Who among you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost, until he find it?" And raising his finger with a passing smile: "I say unto you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over . . ."

VI

It was not yet nine one morning when the concierge of the house in the Avenue de l'Observatoire, where Mme. de Fontanin lived, asked to see her. A "person" there was downstairs who wanted to see her, who did not want to go up to the apartment or to give her name.

"A person? A woman?"

"A young girl."

Mme. de Fontanin recoiled. Another of Jérôme's flames. A blackmailer probably!

"She is so young!" added the concierge. "A mere child."

"I'll go down."

It was really a child who was hiding in the darkness of the concierge's apartment. When she at last raised her head . . .

"Nicole!" exclaimed Mme. de Fontanin as she recognized Noémie Petit-Dutreuil's daughter. Nicole seemed about to run into her aunt's arms, but repressed her impulse. Her face was gray and haggard; her dry eyes had a vacant stare, and she was frowning. She appeared to be excited but was outwardly calm and perfectly mistress of herself.

"I want to speak to you, Aunt Thérèse."

"Come upstairs."

"No, I can't."

"Why?"

"No, not upstairs."

"But why? I am all alone." She could see that Nicole was wavering. "Daniel is at his classes, Jenny has gone to her piano lesson and I'll be alone till lunch time, so come up."

Nicole followed her without uttering a word. Mme. de Fontanin took her to her own room.

"What is the matter?" She could not hide her suspicion: "Who sends you? From where do you come?" Nicole looked at her without lowering her eyes, but her eyelashes were trembling.

"I have run away."

"Oh . . ." said Mme. de Fontanin with a sorrowful expression, but she was rather relieved. "And you came here?"

Nicole shrugged her shoulders in a way which meant: "Where am I to go? I have no one."

"Sit down, my dear. Let us see. . . . You look very tired. You are not hungry?"

"A little." She smiled apologetically.

"Why didn't you say so!" Mme. de Fontanin exclaimed, taking Nicole to the dining-room. When she saw how the little girl was devouring her bread and butter, she took some cold meat and jam out of the sideboard. Nicole ate without speaking, ashamed of her appetite but unable to hide it and drank two cups of tea one after the other. Her color improved.

"When did you eat last?" asked Mme. de Fontanin, more upset than the child. "Are you cold?"

"No."

"You must be, you are shivering."

Nicole moved impatiently, annoyed because she could not conceal her weakness.

"I traveled all night, that's why I am rather cold. . . ."

"Traveled? Where did you come from?"

"Brussels."

"Heavens! From Brussels, alone?"

"Yes," said the girl, and her tone was enough to prove the firmness of her resolution. Mme. de Fontanin took hold of her hand.

"You are frozen. Come back to my room. Will you go to bed and sleep? You can tell me everything later on."

"No, no, now, at once, while we are alone. And I am not sleepy, so please let me."

It was still early in April. Mme. de Fontanin lit the fire, wrapped the fugitive in a shawl and made her sit close to the chimney. At first the child resisted and then gave in unwillingly. Her eyes, steady and glaring, did not soften. She kept looking at the clock, wanting to speak but now that she was settled unable to bring herself to do so. Her aunt avoided looking at her in order not to increase her uneasiness. Some minutes went by and still Nicole had not decided how to begin.

"Whatever you have done, my dear," said Mme. de Fontanin at last, "nobody here will ask you any questions. Keep your secret if you like. I am glad that you thought of coming to us. You are at home here."

Nicole straightened herself up. Was she suspected of having done some terrible thing which should be difficult to confess? As she did so her shawl slipped from her shoulders and showed a firm and healthy bust in strong contrast to her thin face and its extremely youthful features.

"On the contrary," she said, and her eyes were blazing. "I am going to tell you everything." She then began in a provokingly dry tone: "You know, Aunt

Thérèse . . . the day you came to the rue de Monceau . . ."

"Oh," said Mme. de Fontanin, and an expression of suffering came over her face.

". . . I heard everything." Nicole ended her sentence quickly, her eyelids quivering.

A silence followed.

"I knew it, dear."

The little girl smothered a sob and hid her face in her hands as if she were going to burst into tears. But she looked up almost at once, her eyes dry and her lips tightened, changing her ordinary expression and even the tone of her voice:

"Don't judge her too harshly, Aunt Thérèse. She is very unhappy, you know. . . . Don't you believe me?"

"Yes," answered Mme. de Fontanin. A question was hovering upon her lips and she looked at the girl with a calm which would not have deceived anybody. "Is . . . your Uncle Jérôme there also?"

"Yes." She added, after a pause, raising her eyebrows: "It is he who gave me the idea to run away . . . to come here."

"He?"

"No, that is to say . . . For the last eight days he came every morning and gave me some money for food, as I had remained there alone. And two days ago he said to me, 'You would be better off if some charitable soul would take you in.' He said 'a charitable soul.' So I thought of you at once, Aunt Thérèse, and I am sure that he was thinking of you, too, don't you think so?"

"Perhaps . . ." murmured Mme. de Fontanin. She felt so happy that she almost smiled. She hastened to talk.

"But how did it happen that you were alone? Where were you?"

"At home."

"In Brussels?"

"Yes."

"I did not know that your mother had settled in Brussels."

"We had to at the end of November. Everything in the rue de Monceau was seized. Mother has no luck, only annoyances, sheriffs who claim money. Now that her debts are paid they'll be able to come back."

Mme. de Fontanin looked up, wanting to ask: "Whom do you mean by 'they'?" asked the question so clearly that she read the answer upon the child's lips. She was again unable to restrain herself:

"Did he go away in November with her?"

Nicole did not answer. Her aunt's voice had trembled so sorrowfully:

"Aunt Thérèse," she said at last, with an effort, "you must not be angry with me. I don't want to hide anything from you, but it is difficult to explain everything all at once. Do you know M. Arvelde?"

"No, who is he?"

"A great Parisian violinist who was giving me lessons, a great, great artist; he plays at concerts."

"Well?"

"He used to live in Paris but he went to Belgium. That's why we had to go away. He took us with him. He has a house in Brussels and we went there."

"With him?"

"Yes." She understood what the question meant and did not try to evade it, even seeming to take a savage pleasure in keeping nothing back, but she was afraid to say anything more, so remained silent.

After a rather long pause, Mme. de Fontanin went on:

"But where were you when you were alone and when Uncle Jérôme came to visit you?"

"There."

"In that man's house?"

"Yes."

"And . . . your uncle went there?"

"Of course."

"But how did it come about that you were alone there?" Mme. de Fontanin went on gently.

"Because Raoul is touring now in Lucerne and Geneva."

"Who is Raoul?"

"M. Arvelde."

"And your mother left you alone in Brussels to go to Switzerland with him?" The child made a gesture so full of despair that Mme. de Fontanin blushed. "Dear, I am sorry," she murmured. "Don't speak any more about it. You came. I'm glad; stay with us."

But Nicole shook her head violently:

"No, no. I am nearly finished." She breathed deeply and then all in one sentence blurted out. "Listen, Aunt Thérèse, M. Arvelde is in Switzerland without mother because she has an engagement to sing in an operetta on account of her voice which he is cultivating for her. She has had great success, great success in all the papers, I have the cuttings in my pocket; you can look at them." She stopped, not remembering where she had reached in her tale: "Well," she went on with a strange look, "it is precisely because Raoul was going to Switzerland that Uncle Jérôme came.

"But when he came, it was too late, mother had gone.

One evening she kissed me. . . . No," she said, lowering her voice and scowling, "she almost beat me because she did not know what to do with me." She lifted up her head and forced herself to smile: "Oh, she was not really angry with me, on the contrary." . . . Her smile was lost in her effort to speak: "She was so unhappy. Aunt Thérèse, you have no idea how unhappy she was. She had to go because someone was waiting for her downstairs. She knew that Uncle Jérôme was coming, because he had already come several times to see us, and had even played music with Raoul, but the last time he came he said that he would not come any more as long as M. Arvelde was there. So before going away, mother told me to tell Uncle Jérôme that she was leaving me to be gone a long time and that he would have to look after me. I am sure he would have done it but I was afraid to tell him when I saw him coming. He was angry and I thought he might want to go after them, so I lied to him and said that mother was coming back the next day and every day I told him I was expecting her. He looked for her everywhere because he thought she was still in Brussels. As for me, all that was too much and I did not want to stay in that house any longer. First of all because I could not stand Raoul's manservant!" She shivered. "Oh, Aunt Thérèse, he had such eyes, I hated him! Then on the day Uncle Jérôme spoke about a charitable soul, I made up my mind and suddenly yesterday morning as soon as he had given me some money, I went out so the servant would not take it from me. I took refuge in the churches till dark and took the slow night train."

She had spoken quickly with her head bent and when she lifted it, Mme. de Fontanin's sweet face was so

shocked, so severe that Nicole raised her hands beseechingly:

"Don't judge my mother too harshly, Aunt Thérèse. I assure you that what happens is not her fault. You see that I am not always a good girl and of course I am very much in her way. But I am grown up now and I can't live that way any longer. No, I can't," and her lips tightened. "I want to work, to earn my own living, so I won't have to be supported by anybody. That's why I came, Aunt Thérèse. You are the only person I have. What am I to do? Do help me for a few days, Aunt Thérèse. You are the only one who can help me."

Mme. de Fontanin was too much moved to answer her. She had never foreseen that she would be very fond of Nicole. She looked at her with a loving tenderness which she herself enjoyed and which appeased her own sufferings. Nicole was less pretty than she used to be. Her mouth was spoiled by an eruption of cold sores, but her eyes, of a deep grayish blue, and almost too big, too round, were clear and full of loyalty and courage.

When she was able to smile at last she said, bending over Nicole: "My dear, I understand and respect your decision and I promise to help you, but for the moment you are going to stay here with us. You need rest." She was saying "rest," and her look said "affection." Nicole did not misunderstand but she still refused to give way to her feelings:

"I want to work. I don't want to be a burden to anybody."

"And if your mother comes back for you?"

Her clear eyes darkened and became suddenly very hard.

"No, never again!" she said in a hoarse voice.

Mme. de Fontanin chose not to hear. She only said:

"I should willingly keep you with us . . . always."

The young girl rose, seemed to stagger and, kneeling down, put her head in her aunt's lap. Mme. de Fontanin caressed the child's cheek and thought about the things they would still have to discuss.

"My child, you have seen many things you ought not to have seen at your age . . ." she ventured.

Nicole wanted to rise but Mme. de Fontanin prevented her for she did not want the child to see her blushing. The child's head rested upon her knees and unconsciously she was rolling a strand of her fair hair around her finger; she chose her words deliberately:

"You have guessed at many things. . . . Things which must remain . . . secret. Do you understand me?" She bent over and looked into Nicole's eyes. They glittered for a moment.

"Of course, Aunt Thérèse. . . . No one. . . . No one! They would not understand, they would accuse my mother."

She wanted to hide her mother's conduct quite as much as Mme. de Fontanin wanted to hide Jérôme's from his children. It was an unexpected alliance which took definite form when Nicole, after thinking a while, rose, her face full of animation:

"Listen, Aunt Thérèse. Here is what we shall say to them. Mother has been obliged to earn her living and has found a position in a foreign country, in England, for example. A position which prevents her taking me. . . . Yes, that's it, a position as a governess." She added with a childlike smile: "And as mother is gone there will be nothing astonishing in the fact that I am sad, will there?"

VII

The old beau on the ground floor moved out on the 15th of April and on the morning of the 16th, Mlle. de Vaize, preceded by two servants, Mme. Fruhling, the concierge, and a moving man, came to take possession of the bachelor's rooms. The old beau had not enjoyed a very good reputation in the house, and Mademoiselle, holding her black merino cape tightly around her shoulders, waited till all the windows had been opened before entering. Then she went into the hall and trotted around the rooms, half-reassured by the innocent bareness of the walls, and organized the cleaning as if she were exorcising the place.

To Antoine's surprise the old lady had accepted with hardly an objection the idea of the two brothers setting up a place of their own, though such a thing seemed calculated to upset all her traditions and her conception of education and family life. Antoine explained Mademoiselle's attitude by her joy at Jacques's return and by the respect she had for M. Thibault's decision, especially since it was sanctioned by Abbé Vécard. But in reality Mademoiselle's willingness had another cause. She was happy to see Antoine leaving the apartment upstairs. Since she had taken Gisèle to live with her the poor spinster had lived in continual fear of contagious diseases. One spring she had kept Gisèle a prisoner in her room for six weeks, afraid to let her take the air anywhere except on the balcony. She kept

putting off the departure of the whole family to Maisons-Laffite because little Lisbeth Fruhling, the concierge's niece, had whooping cough and one had to pass in front of the concierge's apartment to get out of the house. Naturally, Antoine, with the smell of the hospital hanging all about him, his instruments and his books, appeared to her as a permanent danger. She had begged him never to take Gisèle upon his knees. If, when he came in, he threw his coat absent-mindedly upon a chair in the hall instead of taking it to his room, or if he came in late and sat down at table without washing his hands, although she knew he did not wear any coat while taking care of his patients and that he did not leave the hospital without washing, she was unable to eat, worried by her fears; and as soon as the dessert was served she would take Gisèle to her room and make her wash her nose and throat with an antiseptic. To put Antoine on the ground floor was to create between Gisèle and him a protective zone of two floors and thus reduce as much as possible the daily risks of contagion. She organized the quarters of the quarantined germ-carrier with a rare intelligence. In three days the apartment was cleaned, washed, papered and the curtains were up and the furniture in.

At last Jacques could come.

As soon as she thought about him either her activity increased or she stopped her work a moment to look with her languid eyes at the dear face she summoned up from her memory. Her love for Gisèle had not interfered with her love for Jacques. She had loved him ever since his birth and even before that, since she loved and brought up the mother he had not known and whose place she had taken at his cradle. It was between her outstretched arms that one evening, un-

certain upon his feet, he had taken his first step on the carpet in the passage and for fourteen years she had trembled for him as she now trembled for Gisèle. So much love and such a complete lack of understanding! The child she never left alone for one second remained an enigma to her. Some days she was full of despair at having brought up a monster and cried when she thought about the childhood of Mme. Thibault who had been as sweet as an infant Jesus. She never wondered who was to blame for Jacques's violent temper, only accusing the Devil. On other days, an unexpected act, sudden, exaggerated, through which the child showed his affection, filled her with tenderness and made her cry, this time with joy. She had been unable to become accustomed to his absence and indeed she had never understood the reason for his departure. She wanted his return to be a joyful event and his room to contain everything he loved. Antoine had to prevent her from filling up all the cupboards with his discarded playthings. She took down from her own bedroom the armchair he liked and in which he always sat when he sulked and on Antoine's advice replaced his old bed by a brand new divan which, when covered in the daytime, made the room look like a study.

Gisèle was left to her own devices for two days and shut in her room with her lessons to do, but she could not fix her mind on her books. She was dying to see what was being done downstairs. She knew that her Jacques was coming back and she knew that all the upheaval taking place was on his account. To calm her nerves, she kept walking round and round in her prison.

On the third morning the suspense was unbearable and the temptation so strong that as her aunt had not yet come up at noon she escaped without any more ado

and ran down the stairs. Antoine was just coming in. She burst out laughing, for he had the gift of provoking an irresistible laughter by a certain ferocious and imperturbable way he had of looking at her. Her laughter always lasted as long as he kept this grave manner of his. Mademoiselle used to scold them both when she caught them at it, but now they were alone and they took advantage of the fact:

"Why do you laugh?" he said, taking hold of her wrists. She struggled and laughed still harder. Then she stopped.

"I must not laugh like that any more, you see, or I shall never be able to marry."

"You want to get married?"

"Yes," she said, looking at him with her doglike eyes. He looked at the plump body of the wild child and thought for the first time that this eleven-year-old girl would some day be a woman and marry. He let go of her wrists.

"Where were you running to, alone, without a hat or even a shawl? We are going to have lunch."

"I am looking for Aunt. There is a problem I can't understand. . . ." she said, laughing a little. She blushed and pointed down the dark stairs to the mysterious glass door of the bachelor apartment. Her eyes shone:

"You want to go in there?"

She pronounced "Yes," moving her red lips without uttering a sound.

"You will be scolded."

She hesitated, then looked at him boldly to see if he were joking. At last she declared:

"No, you know it is not a sin."

Antoine smiled, for that was the way Mademoiselle

distinguished between good and evil. He wondered if the spinster's influence was good for the child but a look at Gisèle reassured him. She was such a healthy plant that she would develop anywhere and escape all training.

Gisèle kept looking at the half-open door.

"All right, go in," said Antoine.

She smothered a cry of joy and slipped in like a mouse.

Mademoiselle was alone. Perched on the divan and standing on tiptoe she was hanging on the wall the crucifix she had given Jacques for his first communion and which was going to watch again over the child's sleep. She seemed gay, young, happy and was humming as she worked. She had recognized Antoine's step in the hall and remembered that she had forgotten the time. Meanwhile Gisèle went through all the rooms and unable to suppress her delight she began dancing and clapping her hands in joy.

"Good God!" murmured Mademoiselle, jumping from the bed. In a mirror she saw her niece, her hair floating in the breeze from the open windows, bouncing up and down like a lamb and shrieking at the top of her voice:

"Long live the draughts!
Long live the draughts!"

Mademoiselle did not understand and did not try to. The idea that the little girl might have been brought there did not even cross her mind. She had spent the last seventy years in growing resigned to the tricks the fates play. In the twinkling of an eye she took her little cape off, ran to the child and wrapped her as well as she could in the capulet, took her away without re-

criminations and made her go up the two floors much quicker than she had come down. She did not breathe easily until she had put Gise under a blanket and had given her some kind of medicine.

The truth is that her fears were not without foundation. Gisèle's mother was a native of Madagascar whom Major de Vaize had married in Tamatave where he was garrisoned. She had died of tuberculosis less than a year after the child's birth and two years later the Major himself had succumbed to a slow illness which had never been properly diagnosed and which he was supposed to have caught from his wife. As the orphan's only relative, Mademoiselle had had her brought back from Madagascar and had taken charge of her ever since. The threat of Gisèle's heredity was always haunting her although the child never had had any bad colds and her constitution was excellent and recognized as such by all the doctors and specialists who examined her yearly.

The election at the Institute was to take place in a fortnight and M. Thibault seemed anxious to have Jacques back quickly. It was arranged that M. Faisme would bring him to Paris the following Sunday.

On the Saturday night before Jacques's return Antoine left the hospital at seven, went to dinner in a restaurant near by so that he would not have to dine at home at eight o'clock and went into his new home alone and happy. He was to sleep there for the first time. It gave him pleasure to put his key in the keyhole and to bang the door behind him. He lit the electric lights everywhere and began to walk slowly around his kingdom. He had reserved for himself the rooms that looked out on the street, two big rooms

and a small alcove. The first room, sparsely furnished with some unmatched armchairs around a center table, was to be a waiting-room for his patients. In the second and largest he had put all the furniture he owned in his father's apartment, his large writing-table, his bookcase, his two leather armchairs, all objects which had been part of his student life. His bed had been placed in the alcove which contained a closet and a dressing-table. His books were piled upon the floor in the hall near his trunks, as yet unopened. The stove gave a delightful heat and the new bulbs threw their harsh light on everything. Antoine had only the evening before him in which to take possession, for in a few hours everything had to be unpacked, put away and made ready to be henceforth the setting of his life. Upstairs they would be finishing their meal, Gise would be falling asleep in her place and M. Thibault would be orating. Antoine felt happy and delighted by his solitude. The mirror on the mantelpiece reflected half of his body. With some complacency he went up to it to look at himself. He had a manner of doing so all his own. He would straighten his shoulders, tighten his jaws and look into his own eyes with a harsh look. He chose to ignore that his torso was too long, his legs too short, his arms too thin and his head much too big for his slight body, his beard adding to its disproportion. He wanted to be, he felt himself to be, a strong, bull-necked man. He lifted the wrinkled expression of his face. Through constant frowning, as if he were always trying to concentrate on some problem or other, a ridge had formed in the line of his eyebrows and his eyes in their shadow had acquired an obstinate glare which pleased him as a visible sign of his energy.

"I'll begin with the books," he said, taking off his coat and opening the two doors of the empty bookcase enthusiastically. "Let me see. . . . The lecture notebooks down here. . . . The dictionaries within reach. . . . Therapeutics. . . . Good. . . . Tra la la! At last I have attained my desire, the ground floor, Jacques. . . . Who would have thought it possible only three weeks ago?" he said in a high-pitched voice as if he were imitating someone else. *"Persevering and untamable!"* He looked in the mirror cheerfully and pirouetted in such a way that he nearly let fall the piles of pamphlets he was holding under his chin. "Slowly! Good! My shelves begin to look like something again. Now for the papers. . . . I'll put all the files in my filing cabinet just as they were. . . . But I'll soon have to sort my notes and my observations. . . . They begin to look quite respectable in quantity. . . . I must adopt a logical and clear system of classification with a very up-to-date case record. . . . Just like Philip's. A file of case-records. . . . All the great doctors have them. . . ."

He went from the hall to the filing cabinet, walking so lightly he seemed to be dancing. Suddenly he laughed childishly, a very unexpected laugh. "Dr. Antoine Thibault," he announced, after stopping a second and holding up his head. "Dr. Thibault, Thibault, you know, the children's specialist." He jumped aside quickly, bowed deeply and then recommenced his work very seriously. "I must now unpack the basket trunk. . . . In two years I'll get the gold medal, I'll be chief of a private hospital and then I'll try to be a visiting doctor to one of the hospitals. I shall only stay here for two or three years, not longer, for then I'll have to have a suitable apartment just like the chief's." He

assumed his high-pitched voice again: "Thibault is one of the youngest of our hospital doctors. . . . Philip's right hand. . . . I was clever in specializing at once in children's diseases. When I think of Louiset and of Touron. . . . The idiots. . . ."

"The I-di-ots. . . ." he repeated unconsciously. His arms were full of the most diverse objects and he was seeking the ideal spot for each in a preoccupied way. "If Jacques wants to be a doctor, I'll help him. I'll guide him. . . . Two Doctor Thibaults. . . . Why not? . . . It is a nice career for the Thibaults. A hard one but what a lot of satisfaction there is in it if one loves struggling and has some pride. What efforts of attention, of memory and will! A great doctor. . . . To be like Philip, for example. . . . To be able to assume that delightful, courteous manner. . . . Very courteous but distant. . . . To be M. le Professeur. . . . To be someone, to be called into consultation by jealous colleagues!

"And I chose the most difficult of all specialties, for children don't know what to say or when to say that something is wrong and when they talk they lead one astray. One is really alone, face to face with the disease. . . . Luckily with the X-rays. . . . To-day a good doctor must be an expert on X-rays. . . . and operate them himself. As soon as I am a doctor, I am going to take a course on X-rays and later I'll have an X-ray laboratory . . . with a female assistant . . . or rather a male assistant in a white coat. On consultation days if the cases are rather serious, we'll X-ray at once. . . .

"What gives one confidence in Thibault is that he always begins by having the patient X-rayed. . . ."

He smiled at the sound of his own voice and winked at himself in the mirror: "Well, yes, of course, I know, pride," he thought with a cynical laugh. "Abbé Vécard says: 'the pride of the Thibaults.' My father, he—so be it! What about me? Well, pride also. Why not? Pride is the lever, the lever of all my energies. I use it. I have the right to use it. The first thing one ought to do is to use all one's energies. And what are my energies?" His smile uncovered his teeth. "I know perfectly. First of all, I have a quick mind and a good memory, I remember things easily and I can work hard also. 'Thibault works like an ox!' All the better, let them talk. They would all like to do as much as I do. And after that, what else? I have plenty of energy, as for that, an extra-or-dinary energy," he pronounced the word slowly, trying again with the help of the mirror to see deep down into himself. "It is—potential . . . like a well charged battery, always ready, making me capable of any kind of effort! But what good would all those forces be to me without a lever to use them, Abbé Vécard?" He held in his hand a flat instrument case of white metal which glistened under the glare of the electric chandelier. He did not know exactly what to do with it and finally laid it on top of the bookcase. "So much the better," he said aloud with the Norman and ironical accent which his father used sometimes. "Tra la la, Abbé Vécard, long live pride!"

The trunk was almost empty. From the bottom Antoine took out two small plush frames and looked at them abstractedly. They were photographs of his maternal grandfather and his mother. He, a good-looking old man, in evening dress, standing with his hand

resting on a table covered with a book. She, a young woman with delicate features, an inexpressive but sweet face, with a spare décolleté bodice and two curls falling on her shoulder. He had looked so many times at that picture of his mother that it was thus that he remembered her, although the portrait dated from the time of Mme. Thibault's engagement and he had never seen his mother with her hair dressed that way. He was nine years old when she died, at the time of Jacques's birth. He could recall his grandfather Couturier much better. He had been an economist and a friend of MacMahon and had nearly been made Prefect of the Seine at the fall of M. Thiers. He had been Dean of the Institute for a few years and Antoine could still remember his amiable face, his white muslin ties and his seven razors with mother-of-pearl handles in their sharkskin case.

He placed the two frames on the mantelpiece among samples of rocks and fossils. Now he had to put his desk in order, for it was encumbered with untidy papers. He began gayly. When at last he was through he looked around him with satisfaction. "As for my clothes, Mother Fruhling will have to see to them," he thought lazily. In order to escape entirely from Mademoiselle's supervision, he had arranged matters so that the concierge would be the only one to look after his household. He took a cigarette and stretched himself in one of the leather armchairs. He so rarely had an entire evening to himself without any definite thing to do that he was almost embarrassed by it. It was not very late yet. What should he do? Would he stay there to dream and smoke? He had a few letters to write but the devil with them! He

rose because he thought suddenly, "I want to look at what Hémon has to say about infantile diabetes." He took a big unbound book and turned the pages. "Yes, it is quite evident that I ought to have known," he said, frowning. "I was entirely mistaken. . . . Without Philip, the poor kid would have lost through my mistake. . . . Well, no matter and yet . . ." he closed the book and threw it upon the table. "How cutting the chief is in such cases! He is so full of vanity, so jealous of his position! 'My poor Thibault! The diet you prescribed would only make him worse.' He said it in front of the assistant physicians and the nurses. How clever of him, indeed!"

He shoved his hands into his pockets and walked a few steps. "I ought to have said: 'Well, after all, if you did your duty . . . !' 'That's all right,' he would answer: 'M. Thibault, I think on that point, on one . . .' But I would be ready for him: 'I beg your pardon! If you arrived in time in the mornings and if you waited till the end of the consultation hours instead of going away at half-past eleven to look after your private patients, I would not have to do your work and I would not then run the risk of making mistakes!' There in front of everybody! He would sulk for a fortnight, but I don't care, I am sick of it!"

He suddenly looked disagreeable. He shrugged his shoulders and mechanically began winding up the clock, but he shivered a little, put on his coat and sat down again. All his previous joy had departed and there remained in his heart a feeling of harshness. "The idiot," he murmured with an angry smile. He crossed his legs nervously and lighted another cigarette. But as he said: "The idiot," he was thinking of the sure-

ness, the experience, the amazing intuition of his superior, Dr. Philip, and at that moment he was absolutely overwhelmed by his chief's genius.

"What about me?" he asked himself with a choking sensation. "Will I ever be able to see as clearly as he does? That infallible perspicacity, which alone makes the great diagnostician, Perseverance! . . . But have I any qualities except those of a subordinate? It is not the first time I have stumbled over an easy diagnosis . . . yes, it was a very easy diagnosis, on the whole, a typical case, very clearly defined. Oh," he said, holding out his arms, "it is not easy to work, to acquire position, wealth!" And becoming pale, he thought, "And tomorrow Jacques will be here, tomorrow Jacques will be here, in the room there, and I . . . I . . ."

He rose. Suddenly his resolve to live with his brother appeared to him in an unfavorable light, as the most foolish thing he had ever done! He did not think any more of Jacques as a responsibility he had assumed, but as a fetter which would encumber him whatever he did. He could not understand by what mental aberration he had assumed the responsibility of rescuing his brother. Had he any time to waste? Could he even afford to spend one hour a week on things outside of his own work? What an idiot he had been! He had tied his own neck in the noose! And it was too late to turn back!

He crossed the hall absent-mindedly and opened the door of the room prepared for Jacques. He remained upon the threshold petrified, trying to see into the room in spite of the darkness. He felt very discouraged. Where now could he find peace in order

to work, to think about himself! There were always concessions to be made! Family, friends, Jacques! All conspired to keep him from working, to make a failure of his life! His head was burning and his throat dry. He went to the kitchen, drank two glasses of ice cold water and came back to his study.

His courage had forsaken him. He began to undress. Unaccustomed to this room where he did not have his bearings yet, where ordinary things looked unusual, everything seemed suddenly hostile to him.

It took him an hour to get to bed and longer to go to sleep. He was not accustomed to the street noises so close, and each passerby, whose step sounded on the pavement, made him start. His mind was obsessed by trivial things, he would have to have his alarm-clock mended, he thought of the difficulty he had had one evening in finding a carriage after a party at Dr. Philip's house. . . . From time to time the thought of Jacques's return came back to him with a twinging sharpness and he tossed with despair upon his narrow bed.

"After all," he thought with rage, "I have my own life to lead! Let the others look after him! I'll put him up here since it is all arranged, and I'll organize his work, but that's all. After that he can do what he likes. It's true I consented to look after him, but he is not going to prevent me from achieving my ambitions! I have to look after myself! And everything else. . . ." That evening no trace of his love for his brother remained. He remembered his visit to Crouy. He could see his brother again, thinner, worn through solitude, maybe tubercular, who knew? If that were the case, he would get his father to send Jacques to a

good sanatorium in Auvergne or in the Pyrenees rather than in Switzerland, so that he, Antoine, would be left alone, free to work as he liked, to spend his time in his own way. He caught himself thinking: "I'll take his room and it will be my bedroom."

VIII

When he awoke next day Antoine was in quite a different mood, and during his morning at the hospital he looked at his watch several times impatiently. He was in a great hurry to meet his brother and was at the station long before the appointed time. While walking up and down he went over all he was going to say to M. Faisme about the Foundation, but as soon as the train was in and he had seen Jacques's silhouette and the director's glasses in the stream of travelers, he forgot the well-chosen words he had prepared and ran to meet them.

M. Faisme looked radiant and greeted Antoine as if he were his dearest friend. He was very carefully dressed, wore light gloves and was shaved so closely that he had to use a great deal of powder to cover his flaming face. He seemed ready to accompany the two brothers to their home and urged them to go to a café to have something, but Antoine hastened their separation by calling a taxi. M. Faisme himself put Jacques's luggage on the seat, and when the taxi started, at the risk of ruining his patent leather shoes, he reached through the window to shake hands affectionately with the two young men and to ask Antoine to present his humblest respects to the Honorable Founder.

Jacques was crying.

He had neither said nor done anything in response

to his brother's cordial welcome, but his silence increased Antoine's pity and the reawakened sympathy with which his heart was overflowing. If somebody had reminded him of his animosity of the day before, he would have denied it and would have asserted in all good faith that he had never ceased to feel that the child's return at last gave an object to his existence, which had previously been sterile and empty.

When he had ushered his brother into their apartment and had shut the door behind them, he was as happy as a lover showing his first mistress the abode prepared for her alone. He thought of this and laughed at himself, but what did he care if he were ridiculous? He felt happy and kind. He was watching unsuccessfully for a glimpse of satisfaction upon his brother's face and did not doubt for one instant his success in the task he had undertaken.

Jacques's room had been visited by Mademoiselle at the last minute. She had lighted a fire to make it cosier and had placed, in a prominent position, a plateful of frosted almond cakes, a specialty of which Jacques had always been very fond. In a glass on the table by the bed there was a bunch of violets tied by a streamer of paper on which Gisèle had painted in multicolored letters:

FOR JACQUOT

But Jacquot did not pay any attention to all these preparations. While Antoine was taking off his coat he sat down near the door, holding his hat in his hands.

"Come and have a look around!" shouted Antoine.

The child joined him slowly, looked without showing any sign of interest at the other rooms and came back to his seat. He seemed to be afraid of something.

"Do you want to go and see them?" proposed Antoine and, when he saw Jacques quivering, he understood that he had been thinking of nothing else since his arrival. His face became livid and he lowered his eyes, but rose at once as if he were at the same time terrified by the nearness of the fatal moment and impatient to have it over.

"All right, let us go," said Antoine. "We'll just go in and out," he added, to give Jacques courage.

M. Thibault was waiting for them in his study. He was in a good humor. The sky was beautiful, spring was near, and while he had been seated in his stall at the parochial mass in the morning, he had taken pleasure in repeating to himself that a new member of the Institute would probably be sitting in the same place the following Sunday. He came to meet his sons and kissed the younger. Jacques was sobbing. M. Thibault saw a proof of his remorse and a sign of his good resolutions in his tears. He was more moved than he wanted to show. He made the child sit in one of the straight-backed armchairs which were on each side of the chimney and then, with his hands behind his back, and walking to and fro, puffing as he always did, he delivered a short oration, both firm and affectionate, recalling under what conditions Jacques had the happiness of coming back to the paternal roof and advising him to show Antoine as much deference and respect as if he were his father.

The unexpected visit of a future colleague of his cut his speech short, for as M. Thibault did not want to make him wait in the drawing-room, he said good-by to his sons. He accompanied them to the door of his study, and while he held the curtains with one hand, he laid the other one upon the head of the repentant

boy. Jacques felt his father's fingers stroking his hair and his neck with a new familiarity and he was unable to restrain his emotion. He turned and seized the fat soft hand to kiss it. M. Thibault, surprised and rather embarrassed, opened a disapproving eye and withdrew his hand.

"Well, well . . ." he grumbled, pulling his neck out of his collar several times. This show of sentimentality did not promise well for the future.

They found Mademoiselle dressing Gisèle for Vespers. When, instead of the small noisy devil she was expecting, she saw this tall, pale boy with reddened eyes, Mademoiselle clasped her hands as if in prayer and the ribbons she was putting in the little girl's hair fell to the ground. Her surprise was so great that she hardly dared to kiss him at first.

"Good God! Is it really you?" she said at last, throwing herself upon him and holding him tight against her little cape. Then she walked backwards to look at him and her beady eyes devoured Jacques's face without being able to find any of the features she used to love.

Gise was much more disappointed and very shy. She kept looking down at the carpet, biting her lips to keep from laughing. It was she who had Jacques's first smile:

"Don't you know me?" she said, going up to him. The ice was broken. She threw herself into his arms, and then she jumped about like a lamb, without letting go of his hand. But she did not dare say anything to him, not even to ask him if he had seen her flowers.

They all went down together, Gisèle still holding her Jacquot's hand, and pressing against him silently, with the sensuality of a young animal. At the bottom

of the stairs they separated, but under the arch he turned back and she sent him a big kiss through the glass door with both her hands, but he did not see it.

When they found themselves alone in their own house, Antoine saw at once that his brother was very much relieved at having seen his family and that there was already a great improvement in him.

"We are going to be very comfortable here, the two of us, don't you think?"

"Yes."

"All right, sit down, make yourself at home, take that big armchair. You'll see how comfortable it is. I am going to make some tea. Go and get the cakes. Are you hungry?"

"No, thank you."

"But I want something to eat myself." Nothing could interfere with Antoine's good humor. This solitary hard worker had at last discovered the sweetness of loving, of protecting and of sharing. He was laughing at nothing. It was a happy intoxication which made him more communicative than he had ever been before.

"A cigarette? No? You are looking at me as if . . . as if I were laying traps for you! Look here, old man, relax a little, show some confidence, you are not in the reformatory now! Have you no confidence in me?"

"Y—yes."

"Well, then? Are you afraid that I deceived you, that I made you come back and that you won't be as free as you hoped?"

"N . . . no."

"What are you afraid of? Do you regret anything?"

"No."

"Well? What's going on behind that stubborn forehead of yours?"

He went up to the child and was about to bend over him and kiss him but decided not to. Jacques looked at Antoine sadly and saw that his brother expected an answer.

"Why do you ask me all these things," he said, and after a slight shiver added in a very low voice:

"What do you care?"

There was a short silence. Antoine looked at his younger brother so compassionately that Jacques wanted to cry again.

"You are like a sick person, my dear boy," said Antoine in a sad voice. "But it will disappear. Have confidence in me and let me take care of you and love you," he added shyly, without looking at the boy. "We don't know each other well. Think, nine years' difference between us! As long as you were a child there was an abyss between us. You were eleven, I was twenty, and there was nothing we could share. But now it is different. I don't even know if I loved you then, for I did not think of it. You see I am frank, but I know that things are changed. I am very glad and very pleased to have you here with me. Life is going to be easier and better for both of us, isn't it? You see, when I leave the hospital I am sure I'll hurry to be here quicker than in our own home. And I'll find you here, sitting at your desk after working hard, won't I? And in the evening we'll come down early, we'll sit down, each in our own room, leaving the door open so that we can see each other, and we'll talk like two friends who are unable to make up their minds to go to bed. . . . What is the matter? Are you crying?"

He went closer, sat down on the arm of Jacques's chair, and after hesitating an instant, took his hand. Jacques kept his tear-stained face averted, but he had Antoine's hand in his, and for some moments pressed it feverishly and hard.

"Antoine! Antoine!" he said at last in a choking voice. "Oh! If you knew all that has been going on in me during the last year. . . ."

He was sobbing so much that Antoine did not care to ask any questions, but he kept his arm around Jacques's shoulders. Once before, when their friendship had just begun, in the darkness of the taxi, he had known a similar moment of intoxicating pity, of superabundant strength and will-power and very often since, a certain thought had come to his mind, and it became suddenly very clear that night. He rose and began pacing the room.

"Listen," he began, in a very exalted manner, "I don't know why I speak about it to-day for we'll have occasion to come back to it. You see, I am thinking of this; we are brothers. It seems nothing and yet the idea is quite new to me and very important. Brothers! Not only have we the same blood but we have had the same roots since the beginning of time, and the same sap flows in us, the same energy! We are not only two individuals, Antoine and Jacques, but we are two Thibaults. We are *the* Thibaults. Do you understand what I want to convey to you? And the point is that we have energy within us, the same energy, the Thibaults' energy. Do you understand? We Thibaults are not like other people; I think that we have something more than others and that is why we are Thibaults. Everywhere I have been, at the lycée, at medical school, at the hospital, everywhere,

I feel I am a Thibault, a human being apart. I don't like to say superior, and yet why not, yes, superior, armed with a strength that others do not have. And you, do you think of it? At school, did you not feel, however dull you were, an internal energy which raised you above the others in strength?"

"Yes," said Jacques, who had stopped crying. He was studying his brother with an intense interest and his face had suddenly assumed an expression of intelligence and maturity which made him look ten years older.

"I saw it a long time ago," went on Antoine. "There must be within us an exceptional combination of pride, violence, obstinacy. I don't know how to put it. Now, you see, I am thinking of father. . . . You don't know him well. And with him it is different. Well," he went on, after a pause, and he sat down face to face with Jacques, bending over him, his hands upon his knees, just like M. Thibault, "the only thing I wanted to tell you to-day was that this secret strength appears all the time in my life. I don't know how to express it, just like a wave, just like those strong waves which lift you when you swim and carry you in a great bound over a long stretch! You'll see! It is marvelous, but you must know how to use it. Nothing is impossible. Nothing is even difficult when you have that strength, and we have it, you and I. Do you understand? Look at me. . . . I am not saying this for myself. Let us talk about you. Now is the moment to measure this strength in you, to know it is there, to use it. You'll make up for the time you have lost at once if you want to. To have will-power! It is not everybody who has it. I have not always understood that. Yes, I have will-power and you have it also. The Thibaults all

have it. That's why the Thibaults can do anything. To surpass others! To impose ourselves upon them. We have to do it, for all our hidden strength must amount to something! It is in us that the Thibaults tree must flourish, the flowers of a line! Do you understand that?" Jacques was still looking straight at Antoine with a painful attention. "Do you understand that, Jacques?"

"Yes, I understand!" he almost shouted. His clear eyes shone and there was a kind of irritation in his voice. He had a strange line at the corner of his lips and one would almost have said that he was angry with his brother for disturbing him by this unexpected outburst. He shivered, then his face relaxed and took an expression of extreme fatigue.

"Please leave me alone!" he said suddenly, and he put his hands over his forehead.

Antoine stopped and looked at his brother. In a fortnight he had become still thinner and paler! His red hair had been shaven, and disclosed more plainly an unusually large head, outstanding ears and the fragility of his neck. Antoine saw the transparency of his skin at the temples, the dullness of his complexion and the dark circles around his eyes.

"Have you cured yourself?" he asked him point blank.

"Of what?" murmured Jacques. His clear eyes clouded, and he blushed, but kept the astonished look he had assumed.

Antoine did not answer.

It was growing late. Antoine looked at his watch and rose, for he had to make his round at the hospital about five o'clock. He hesitated to tell his brother that he would be left alone until dinner time, but,

contrary to his expectations, Jacques appeared to be pleased to see him go.

When he was left alone he felt better. He thought of exploring the apartment, but in the hall, face to face with closed doors, he was seized by an inexplicable sorrow and came back to his room and shut himself in. He had hardly looked at the room. At last he saw the bunch of violets and the paper streamer. The day's happenings jumbled together in his mind, his father's welcome, Antoine's conversation. He stretched himself out on his divan and cried again, but without despair, from sheer fatigue and also because of the room, of the violets, of the hand his father had laid upon his head, because of Antoine's attention, of this new and unknown life; because everybody seemed to want to love him, because now they were going to look after him, going to talk to him, smile at him, because he would have to answer everybody and, finally, because this was the end of his tranquillity.

IX

To make the transition easier for Jacques Antoine had postponed till October his return to a school, and with the aid of some ex-comrades of his now at the University, he had planned instead a program of studies to reëducate the child's intelligence little by little. Three tutors shared the work, all young men and Antoine's friends. The obedient child worked at his own hours and according to his own wishes and soon Antoine had the pleasure of seeing that the solitude of the reformatory had not done as much harm to his brother's mental faculties as he had feared. Indeed, in some ways his mind had become extraordinarily mature in solitude, so much so that after a slow start his progress was more rapid than Antoine had dared to hope. Jacques was using the independence granted to him without abusing it, and Antoine, without telling his father, but with the tacit assent of Abbé Vécard, gave him a great deal of freedom without fear of the results. He knew that Jacques's nature was rich and that there was a lot to be gained by letting it develop in its own way.

During the first few days the child had felt a great aversion to going out of the house, for the crowds on the street made him shrink into himself. Antoine had to invent things for him to do to force him to go outdoors, but gradually Jacques renewed his acquaintance

with his old haunts and soon became very fond of his walks. The weather was lovely and he enjoyed following the quays up to Notre Dame or walking idly in the Tuileries. One day he even went to the Louvre, but he found the air so stifling and dusty and the rows of pictures so monotonous that he escaped quickly and never went back again.

At meals he remained silent, listening to his father. Of course the fat man was so dictatorial and so difficult to get along with that the unlucky one who was obliged to live with him took refuge in silence. Mademoiselle herself, in spite of her gaping admiration for him, never showed herself as she really was in his presence. M. Thibault always enjoyed this deferential silence which gave a free rein to his need of thrusting his judgments upon other people and naïvely took it to mean general approbation. He observed a great reserve towards Jacques, and faithful to his promises, never asked him any questions about the way he was spending his time.

But M. Thibault showed himself to be adamant on one point, and he absolutely refused to allow any relations with the Fontanins. As an added precaution he decided that Jacques would not go to Maisons-Laffite that year, where M. Thibault went every spring with his household and where the Fontanins also owned a small property on the edge of the forest. It was decided that Jacques should spend that summer in Paris with Antoine.

This matter of renewing acquaintance with the Fontanins was the subject of a serious talk between Antoine and Jacques. The latter's first impulse had been one of revolt, for he had the feeling that past

injustice would never be effaced as long as his friend continued to be suspected. It was a violent reaction which did not displease Antoine, for it proved to him that Jacques, the real Jacques, was coming back to life. When the first flush of anger was over he tried to reason with the boy and had no great trouble in obtaining from him the promise that he would not try to see Daniel again. To tell the truth, Jacques did not want to see him as much as one might have thought, for he was still too much of a recluse to wish for other contacts and his brother's company was enough for him, particularly since Antoine treated him as if he were a comrade, without ever emphasizing the difference in their ages or his authority over him.

One day in the early part of June, Jacques, as he was returning from a walk, saw a crowd in the doorway. Mother Fruhling had had a stroke and had been found lying on the floor of her lodging. She regained consciousness in the evening, but her right arm and leg were paralyzed.

One morning somebody rang the bell some days later as Antoine was going out. A girl with a pink blouse and a black apron appeared in the doorway blushing but with a cheeky smile:

"I came to do the housework. . . . Does not M. Antoine recognize me? Lisbeth Fruhling. . . ."

She spoke like an Alsatian through her childish lips, drawling her words even more than is usual with them. Antoine remembered quite well Mother Fruhling's orphan who used to jump about in the court on one foot. She explained she had come from Strasbourg to

take care of her aunt and to do her work. She began at once.

She came every day, bringing up the tray and presiding at the young men's breakfast. Antoine used to tease her about her blushes and asking her questions about German life. She was nineteen, and since she had left the house six years ago had lived in Strasbourg with her uncle, who ran a hotel near the station. As long as Antoine was there Jacques would take part in the conversation, but as soon as he was left alone with Lisbeth in the apartment, he avoided her.

However, on the days when Antoine was on duty at the hospital and she brought Jacques's breakfast to his room, he would ask for her aunt and Lisbeth would not spare him any details. Mother Fruhling was improving slowly and her appetite was better every day. Lisbeth had a great respect for food. She was small, plump and the suppleness of her body betrayed her passion for dancing and singing and showed she was fond of pleasure. When she laughed she looked at Jacques without any embarrassment. She had a very lively face, a short nose, two lips slightly swollen, two china blue eyes and a great deal of fuzzy hemp-colored hair which grew low on her forehead.

Lisbeth chatted a little longer every day and Jacques's shyness began to disappear and he listened to her very gravely. He had a way of listening which always brought him the confidence of people, servants, boys and even sometimes of his teachers. Lisbeth talked to him much more freely than to his brother, but she acted more like a child with Antoine.

Jacques was turning the pages of a German dictionary one morning and when she saw this Lisbeth lost all reserve. She wanted to see what he was trans-

lating and she became sentimental about a song of Goethe's she knew by heart. She sang it.

"Fliesse, fliesse, lieber Fluss!
Nimmer werd'ich froh. . . ."

German poetry always went to her head. She hummed several romances and explained the first verses to him. She found beautiful everything that was sad and puerile:

"If I were a little swallow,
Ah, how I would fly to you! . . ."

She had a predilection for Schiller. She became serious and recited a fragment she loved above all others, the passage in Mary Stuart, where the young queen, a prisoner, is allowed to walk a few steps in the garden and she flees across the lawns, blinded by the sun, drunk with youth. Jacques could not understand all the words, so she translated as she went along, and to express the queen's urge towards freedom, she found such naïve words that Jacques thought of his adventure and he was still living alone and spoke so rarely that the sound of his voice intoxicated him very quickly. He became animated, and invented things, putting into his tale all kinds of literary touches since the best part of his work for the last two months had consisted in reading the novels in Antoine's bookcase. He felt that his romantic tales would have more power over Lisbeth's imagination than the simple truth. When he saw the pretty girl drying her eyes in the attitude of Mignon crying for her country, he felt the delight of the artist, a feeling hitherto unknown to him, and was so grateful to her, that eager with hope, he asked himself if he was not in love.

The next morning he waited for her impatiently. She probably guessed it, for she brought him an album of picture postcards, autographs, dried flowers, showing her life for the last three years, all her life. Jacques showered questions upon her, for he loved to be astonished and was astonished by anything he did not know. Lisbeth's stories were crowded with dubious details which were not definite enough to allow one to suspect her good faith, but sometimes, when her cheeks reddened and her voice became more drawling, she had an air of invention, even of lying, such as can very often be noticed in people who try to tell a dream. She was transported with pleasure in speaking of the winter nights at the dancing school where the young men and women of the neighborhood met. The dancing master, with a very small violin, would run after the couples beating time while Madame would play the latest Viennese dances on the automatic piano. They would have supper at twelve o'clock and then in joyous bands they would go out into the night and accompany each other from house to house without being able to separate, as the snow was so pleasant under the feet, the sky so clear and the wind so pleasing to the cheeks. Sometimes two non-commissioned officers would join the regular dancers. One of them was Fredi, the other was Will. Lisbeth hesitated a long time before pointing out in the photograph of a group in uniform the fat wooden boy who had the Christian name of Will—"Ach," she said, dusting the photograph with the back of her sleeve, "he is so noble, so languorous!" She must have been more intimate with him than she cared to admit, as there was a story of zither, raspberries and junket, in the middle of which she stopped with an unexpected laugh and which she

never finished. Sometimes she would call Will her *fiancé* and again she could talk about him as if she had lost him for ever. At last Jacques gathered that he had been sent away to a garrison in Prussia after a strange and ridiculous episode whose remembrance made her shiver with fright and shriek with laughter. In the story there was a hotel room at the end of a passage with a creaking floor, but from that point everything became incomprehensible; the room must have been in Fruhling's hotel, otherwise the old uncle would not have been running after the non-com in the middle of the night, chasing him through the yard and eventually throwing him into the street in his shirt and shoes. Lisbeth added, as an explanation, that her uncle was thinking of marrying her and also told him that he had a hare-lip from which a cigar dangled from morning to night. The cigar smelt like soot, and without any transition from being all smiles, she burst into tears.

Jacques was sitting at his table, the album lying in front of him and Lisbeth was perched on the arm of his chair, so that, when he bent over, her breath and her curls tickled his ears. His senses were not excited. Another world was opening to him, now quite different from the one he had known, and he was discovering that he was capable, taking the words from an English novel which he had been reading, of chaste love. He felt completely pure and happy.

All day he imagined the next day's meeting in the most minute details. They would be alone in the apartment with no one to disturb them the whole morning. Lisbeth would be sitting on the sofa, on his right. She would bend her head forward, and as he stood beside her, he would bend over her: "I don't want you to go

away. . . ." At these words she would raise her eyes with a questioning look and his answer would be a kiss on her forehead, their betrothal kiss. "I'll be twenty in five more years. I shall tell father: 'I am not a child any more.' If they tell me: 'She is the concierge's niece, I . . .'" He made a threatening gesture. *"Fiancée! . . .* You are my *fiancée!"* His room seemed too small for so much happiness and he went out. Even the outdoor air seemed stuffy. He walked on delightedly. *"Fiancée! Fiancée!* She is my *fiancée!"*

He was sleeping so profoundly the next day that he did not even hear her ring, and as he jumped from his bed he recognized her laughter in Antoine's room. When he joined them Antoine had finished breakfast and was ready to go out. He was holding Lisbeth by her shoulders:

"Do you hear?" he was threatening, "if you let her drink coffee again I'll get after you." Lisbeth laughed in her odd way, for she could not believe that good German coffee, with plenty of milk and sugar and swallowed boiling hot, could do any harm to Mother Fruhling.

They were alone. She put on the tray some cakes covered with aniseed which she had made for him the day before and watched him eating his breakfast with great deference. He was angry with himself because he was hungry. When he had made his plans the day before, he had forgotten about breakfast and did not know how to combine reality with the scene he had so meticulously prepared. And to top his discomfiture, someone rang. What a surprise it was to see Mother Fruhling hobble in! She was not entirely well, but

she was better, and had come up to say good morning to M. Jacques. After that Lisbeth had to help her downstairs and make her comfortable in her armchair. Time passed and she did not come back. Jacques had never been able to put up with the restraints of circumstances and he paced to and fro, succumbing to a mood very much like one of his old fits of rage. He tightened his jaws, put his fists in his pockets, and began to be angry with her.

When she reappeared at last, his mouth was dry and his eyes wicked. Waiting had upset him so much that his hands trembled. He tried to look as if he were working and she hurried with her housework and said good-by. With murder in his heart he bent over his books and let her go out, but as soon as he was alone he turned away and smiled so bitterly that he had to go to the mirror to enjoy it objectively. For the twentieth time his imagination went over the scene he had invented: Lisbeth sitting down and he standing, the nape of her neck . . . He was in such despair that he put his hands over his eyes and threw himself on the divan to cry, but tears would not come. He felt nervous and resentful.

When she came in the next day she looked so sad that Jacques thought she was reproaching him and his resentment melted away, but in reality she had received bad news from Strasbourg. The hotel was full and her uncle wanted her back. Fruhling was willing to have patience for another week but no longer. She had intended to show the letter to Jacques but he looked at her so shyly and affectionately that she kept the sad news to herself. She sat on the sofa just on the spot where he had decided she would be and he stood where he had imagined himself. She

bent her head and he saw, underneath her curls, the nape of her neck disappear in her blouse. He bent over her like an automaton, but she looked up a little too soon. She was surprised, but she smiled, drew him down beside her upon the divan and without any hesitation laid her face against his, her temple against his temple, her warm cheek against his.

"Darling . . . Liebling. . . ."

He thought he would faint from love and shut his eyes. He felt Lisbeth's finger tips, roughened by sewing, caress his free cheek and slip under his collar. The button came off. He felt a delightful sensation as the small warm hand inserted itself between his shirt and his skin, nestling against his chest. Then he also ventured two fingers, which were stopped by a brooch, until she herself opened her blouse to help him. He held his breath and as his hand touched her flesh, she moved as if he had tickled her . . . . . He blushed and kissed her awkwardly. At once she gave him back his kiss full on the mouth. He was a little taken aback, a little disgusted, even, by the warmth of the kiss. She put her face back against his and stopped moving. He could feel her eyelashes tickling his temple.

This became a daily rite. She would take off her brooch as soon as she entered the hall and pin it on the portière. They would sit down on the divan, cheek against cheek, sometimes they would remain silent, and sometimes she would tell some German story which would bring tears to their eyes. For a long time they would sway their bodies locked in each other's

arms and exchange kisses without desiring anything else. If Jacques's fingers went too far under her blouse, if he moved his head a little to touch Lisbeth's cheek with his lips, she would look at him with her eyes which always seemed to beg him to be gentle with her and would sigh:

"Be languorous. . . ."

And once the hands were in their accustomed place they remained there. With a tacit understanding Lisbeth and Jacques avoided further exploration. They were contented to press their faces together and to feel their warm hearts beating. Lisbeth often seemed tired, and when with Jacques she easily brushed away all idea of more sensual pleasure and became intoxicated with purity and poetry. Jacques did not have to put aside any temptation—for him their chaste caresses were an end in themselves and the idea that they could be the prelude for others did not even cross his mind. Sometimes the warmth of her body caused a physical disturbance of which he was hardly conscious and he would have been ready to die of shame and disgust at the thought that Lisbeth might be aware of it. No impure desire had ever come to him when they were together; in their relationship there was a complete disassociation between his body and his spirit. The spirit belonged to the beloved one and the body led its solitary life in another world, a night world of which Lisbeth knew nothing. If sometimes, when he was unable to sleep, he had to get out of bed, take off his shirt, kiss his arms and touch his body with an unsatiable frenzy, it was always alone, far from her. Lisbeth's image was never mingled with the usual procession of his evocations.

The date for Lisbeth's departure was approaching. She was to leave Paris the following Sunday by the night train. She did not have the courage to tell Jacques that.

That Sunday, when Antoine went home, he found what he had expected—Jacques was upstairs at dinner and Lisbeth was waiting for him. She threw herself into his arms and began crying.

"Well?" he asked with a strange smile.

She made a negative sign.

"And you are going soon?"

"Yes."

He made an impatient gesture.

"It is his fault!" she said, "he does not think about it."

"You promised to think of it for him."

She looked at him. She despised him a little, because he would not understand that for her "it was not the same thing." But she was in love with Antoine's good looks and handsome figure and pardoned him for being like the others.

She had pinned her brooch to the curtain and was undressing mechanically, already thinking about her journey, when Antoine took her in his arms. She gave a shrill laugh which was lost in her throat:

"Liebling. . . . Be languorous for our last evening. . . ."

Antoine was away all evening. About eleven o'clock Jacques heard him come in and go noiselessly to his room. He was going to bed and did not call to him.

As he climbed into bed, his knee touched something hard. It was a surprise package wrapped in silver paper, containing some seed cakes sticky with

caramel, a silk handkerchief with Jacques's initials and a small note on mauve paper:

To my beloved!

She had never written to him before. It made him feel as if they were together. He was laughing with pleasure as he opened the envelope:

"Monsieur Jacques:

"When you get this dear letter I shall be far away. . . ."

The lines blurred and his forehead became covered with sweat.

" . . . I shall be far away as I am taking the night train at the Gare de l'Est for Strasbourg. . . ."

"Antoine!"

It was such a heartrending cry that Antoine ran in thinking his brother had been hurt.

Jacques was sitting upon his bed, his legs outstretched, his mouth wide open, his eyes full of prayer. He looked as if he were dying and as if Antoine alone could save him. The letter was lying on the bed. Antoine read it unmoved, for he had just accompanied Lisbeth to the train. He bent over his brother but Jacques stopped him:

" . . . Please don't speak, don't speak. You can't know, Antoine, you can't understand."

He was using the same words as Lisbeth. His face was stubborn and his eyes had a strange stern glint which made Antoine think of the child he used to be. Suddenly his chest heaved, his lips began to tremble,

and as if he were trying to get away from someone, he turned away and fell sobbing on the bolster. One of his arms remained behind and Antoine touched the clenched hand which took hold of his at once and squeezed it tenderly. He did not know what to say and kept looking at his brother who was shaken by sobs. Once more the fire, hidden under the ashes, but always ready to leap out, was revealed to him, and he saw the vanity of his pretensions as an educator.

Half an hour went by. Jacques's hand had loosened its grasp and he was not sobbing any more, though still heaving from time to time. . . . Little by little his breathing became regular and he fell asleep. Antoine did not move and could not make up his mind to leave. He kept thinking about Jacques's future and waited for another half-hour before he tiptoed away, leaving the door ajar.

The next day Jacques was asleep, or feigning sleep, when Antoine left the house.

They met upstairs at the family table. Jacques looked tired and had a sneering expression at the corner of his mouth, the expression of a child proud of being misunderstood. During the meal his eyes avoided Antoine's. He did not even want to be pitied. Antoine understood, and as a matter of fact, he did not very much care to talk about Lisbeth.

Life was resumed as if nothing had happened.

X

One evening, before dinner, Antoine was surprised to find in his mail an envelope addressed to him containing a sealed letter with his brother's name on it. He did not recognize the writing and since Jacques was in the room, he did not want to show any hesitation:

"Here is a letter for you," he said.

Jacques blushed and walked quickly over to Antoine, who had started to turn over the pages of a book catalogue. He gave Jacques the envelope without looking at him. When he looked up a moment later he saw that Jacques had pocketed the letter. Their eyes met and Jacques's were quite aggressive.

"Why do you look at me like that?" he said. "I have a right to receive a letter, haven't I?"

Antoine stared at his brother a moment and then without saying a word turned his back and left the room.

During dinner he talked to M. Thibault and ignored Jacques. The brothers went downstairs together as usual but without exchanging a word. Antoine went to his room and had hardly seated himself at his desk when Jacques entered without knocking, went up to him and in a provoking manner threw the open letter on his desk.

"As you watch my correspondence, here it is!"

Antoine folded the letter without reading it and held it out to his brother, but as the latter did not take it, he opened his fingers and the letter fell upon the carpet. Jacques picked it up and buried it in his pocket.

"Well, then, it is no use being annoyed at me," he sneered.

Antoine shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, if you want to know, I am sick of it," went on Jacques, raising his voice. "I am not a child any more. I want . . . I have a perfect right . . ." Antoine's calm and attentive expression irritated him. "I tell you I am sick of it!" he shouted.

"Sick of what?"

"Of everything." His face had lost all color and his fixed and angry look, his outstanding ears and his open mouth made him look like an idiot. He became very red. "And this letter only came here by mistake! I asked to have it sent to the post office! There, at least, I can get all the letters I want without having to give account to anybody!"

Antoine was still studying him without answering, and his silence gave him the upper hand and hid his embarrassment. The child had never spoken to him in such a way before.

"And I want to see Fontanin again, do you understand? No one can prevent me!"

That gave him the clue. It was the writing in the gray notebook! Jacques was corresponding with Fontanin, in spite of his promises. Did Mme. de Fontanin know? Had she given her consent to a clandestine correspondence?

Antoine saw that he would be obliged for the first

time in his life to assume the rôle of father. A short time ago he might have been as impudent to M. Thibault as Jacques was to him now. Only his position was reversed.

"Then you have written to Daniel?" he asked, frowning.

Jacques nodded very defiantly.

"Without telling me?"

"Well, what of it?" said the boy. Antoine almost got up to slap his impudent face, but he clenched his fists, trying his best to remain self-controlled. The turn the conversation had taken might ruin everything he wanted to do.

"Go away," he said, very discouraged. "I don't understand what you are saying this evening."

"I am saying that I am tired of it!" shouted Jacques, stamping his foot. "I am not a child any more and I want to see whom I please. I am sick of living as I do. I want to see Fontanin, because he is my friend. I wrote to him about it. I know what I am doing. I gave him a rendezvous. You can tell it to whom you please. I have had enough of it, enough, enough!" He stamped his feet, full of hatred and revolt.

What he did not tell, what Antoine could hardly guess, was that after Lisbeth's departure the poor boy had felt his heart to be so empty and so heavy that he had given in to the need of confiding his secret to another youthful human being and to his desire to share with Daniel this burden which was smothering him. On his solitary exaltation he had in advance lived hours of perfect friendship, when he would beg his friend to love one-half of Lisbeth and Lisbeth to let Daniel take charge of this part of her love.

"I told you to go," replied Antoine, pretending to

remain unmoved and enjoying his superiority. "We'll speak about this when you are more reasonable."

"Coward!" yelled Jacques, exasperated by Antoine's calm. "Pedant!" And he went out banging the door after him.

Antoine got up to lock his door and sat down in an armchair, pale with rage.

"Pedant! The idiot! Pedant! I'll get even with him. If he thinks he can get away with that . . . he is mistaken! My evening is spoiled—I can't work now. I'll get even with him. Where is the peace I used to have? What a blunder I made and all for the sake of that young idiot! Pedant! The more one does for them! I am indeed an idiot, I waste my time, spoil my work for him, but this is the end. I have my own life to live, my exams. It is not that young idiot who . . ." He could not sit still and began walking around the room. He imagined himself talking to Mme. de Fontanin and assumed a firm and wise expression: "I did all I could, Madame. I tried affection and gentleness. I gave him the greatest freedom, and there you are. Believe me, Madame, there are natures with which one can do nothing. Society has only one means of defending herself from them. It is by preventing them from doing harm. It is for good reason that reformatories call themselves: Institutions for Social Preservation." A noise that sounded like a rat nibbling made him turn his head and he saw that a note had been pushed under the closed door.

"I beg your pardon for pedant. I am not angry any more. Let me come back!"

Antoine smiled in spite of himself. He felt a sudden burst of affection and walked to the door involuntarily and opened it. Jacques was waiting. He was

so nervous that he lowered his head and bit his lips to keep from laughing. Antoine assumed an irritated and distant expression and went back to his desk.

"I have to work," he said dryly. "You have made me lose enough time already. What do you want?"

Jacques raised his laughing eyes and looked his brother straight in the face.

"I want to see Daniel again," he declared after a short silence.

"You know that father is against it," began Antoine. "I took the trouble to explain to you why. Do you remember? That day we decided between us that you would accept this state of things and that you would do nothing to renew relations with Fontanin. I had confidence in your word and this is the result. You deceived me and at the first opportunity you broke the contract. It is the end. I'll never be able to trust you any more."

Jacques was sobbing.

"Don't say that, Antoine. You are unjust. You don't know. It is true that I was wrong and I ought not to have written without talking it over with you. It is because there is something else I would have been obliged to tell and I could not do it!" He murmured: "Lisbeth. . . ."

"That's not the question," interrupted Antoine at once, in order to avoid a confidence which would have embarrassed him much more than his brother. And to force Jacques to change the subject: "I am willing to attempt a new and last experiment. You are going to promise me. . . ."

"No, Antoine, I can't promise you not to see Daniel again. It is you who are going to promise me to let me see him. Listen, Antoine, don't get angry. I

swear before God that I won't hide anything more from you. But I must see Daniel and I won't see him again without your knowing and neither will he. I had asked him to answer me, care of the Post Office, but he would not do it. Listen to what he writes me: 'Why care of the Post Office? We have nothing to hide. Your brother has always been on our side. It is to him that I send this note for him to give to you.' And at the end he refused the rendezvous that I proposed to him behind the Pantheon: 'I spoke to mother about it. The simplest way would be for you to come and spend Sunday with us as soon as possible. Mother likes you both very much, your brother and yourself and she asked me to write to both of you.' You see, he is loyal. Papa does not know about him and condemns him. He doesn't know anything about Daniel and I don't blame him very much, but with you, Antoine, it is not the same thing. You know Daniel, you understand him, you have seen his mother, you have no reason to act as papa does. You ought to be pleased that I have this friendship. I have been alone such a long time! I beg your pardon, I am not saying that to hurt you, you know that very well. But you are one thing and Daniel is another. You have friends of your own age, haven't you? You know what it means to have a real friend?"

"No . . ." thought Antoine, looking at Jacques's happy and affectionate expression as soon as he pronounced the word *friend*. He wanted suddenly to kiss his brother, but Jacques's attitude was so bellicose and hostile that it hurt Antoine's pride. As he wanted to break this obstinacy, he did not answer. He stretched out his legs and tried to think.

"Really," he was telling himself, "I am not narrow-

minded and I must agree that my father's veto is absurd. Fontanin can only have a good influence upon Jacques. His environment is perfect and it would help me greatly in my undertaking. Certainly, *she* would help me, she would see things more clearly than I do, she would quickly have an influence upon the boy. She is a first-class woman, but if father heard . . . Well? I am not a child any more. Who assumed the responsibility for Jacques? I did. So I have the right to say the last word in the matter. I think that father's order is unjust and absurd, so I shall forget it, that's all. Jacques will be more attached to me if I let him have his own way. He will think: 'Antoine is not like father.' And then I am sure that the mother . . ." He saw himself for the second time face to face with Mme. de Fontanin, who was smiling: "Madame, I wanted to bring you my brother myself. . . ."

He got up, took a few steps and planted himself in front of Jacques who had remained standing, firmly resolved to combat and conquer Antoine's opposition.

"I am obliged to tell you, since you force me to it, that my intention has always been to let you see the Fontanins in spite of father's orders. I was thinking of taking you there myself. So you see? But I wanted to wait till you were yourself again, I wanted to wait till school began. Your letter to Daniel hurries things. All right. I assume all responsibility. Father will know nothing about it, and neither will the Abbé. We will go on Sunday if you want to.

"You can see," he added after a pause and in a tone of affectionate reproach, "how mistaken you were, how wrong not to give me some credit. I have repeated to you twenty times, there must be confidence between

the two of us, or all that we have hoped for will be a failure."

"On Sunday?" Jacques stammered, taken aback at having obtained his end without any struggle. At first he had the impression that he was the dupe of some plot he could not understand but was ashamed of that suspicion at once. Antoine was really his best friend. What a pity he was so old! But next Sunday? Why so soon? He was now asking himself if it were true that he wanted to see his friend again so badly.

XI

THE next Sunday Daniel was sitting beside his mother sketching when the little dog began to bark. Someone had rung the bell. Mme. de Fontanin put down her book.

"Let me go, mother," said Daniel, going first to the door. Because they had little money they had been obliged to dismiss the housemaid and the cook. Nicole and Jenny helped with the housework.

Mme. de Fontanin, who was listening, smiled when she recognized Pastor Gregory's voice and went to meet him. He had taken hold of Daniel by the shoulders and was looking at him. He said with a throaty laugh:

"What? Still indoors, boy, with this beautiful weather? The French will never have either canoes, cricket or sports." The brightness of his small black eyes, filled entirely by the eyeballs, with no white showing, was so hard to put up with when one looked at him closely that Daniel turned away his head with a forced smile.

"Don't scold him," said Mme. de Fontanin. "He expects a visit from a comrade. You know the Thibaults?"

The pastor searched his memory. Suddenly with amazing energy, he clasped his thin hands vigorously together until the sparks seemed to fly from them while his mouth opened wide in a strange smile.

"Oh, yes," he said at last, "the bearded doctor? Good, brave young man. Do you remember his astonishment when he came and found our dear little girl revived? He wanted to measure the change with his thermometer! Poor fellow! But where is our darling? Shut up in her room in such splendid weather?"

"No, Jenny is out with her cousin. They had hardly time to eat their breakfast, for they are trying a new camera Jenny got for her birthday."

Daniel, who was bringing a chair for the pastor, raised his head and looked at his mother, whose voice had faltered while giving that detail.

"About Nicole?" asked Gregory, sitting down. "Nothing new?"

Mme. de Fontanin made a sign saying no. She did not want to speak about Nicole before her son, who at the mention of her name had looked at the pastor.

"Tell me, boy," he said abruptly, turning to Daniel, "when will your bearded doctor friend come to bother us?"

"I don't know, probably about three o'clock."

Gregory stood up and took out from his clergyman's waistcoat a silver watch as big as a saucer.

"Very well!" he said. "You lazy boy, you have almost an hour before you. Take out your coat and go round at once to the Luxembourg to see if you can make a record. Go on."

The boy exchanged a look with his mother and rose.

"All right, I'll leave you," he said meaningly.

"Clever boy!" muttered Gregory, threatening him with his fist.

But as soon as he was alone with Mme. de Fontanin his shaven face looked kind and his expression became tender.

"Now," he said, "the time has come for me to speak to your heart only, dear." He drew aside as if in silent prayer, and then with a nervous gesture ran his fingers through his dark locks and took a chair on which he sat astride. "I have seen him," he said, looking at Mme. de Fontanin whose face became pale.

"I come from him. He is repentant and he is very unhappy!" He looked steadily at her and enveloping her in his obstinately happy look he seemed to want to prevent the suffering he was giving her.

"He is in Paris?" she muttered, without thinking of what she was saying since she knew that Jérôme had come himself two days before to leave the camera for his daughter with the concierge. Wherever he was, he had never yet forgotten his children's birthdays or hers. "Did you see him?" she asked in a listless voice and the expression upon her face was noncommittal. For months she had been thinking about him so continuously but in so vague a manner that a kind of haziness suffused her now that they were speaking about him.

"He is unhappy," insisted the pastor. "He is full of remorse. His wretched mistress is still a singer, but he is so disgusted that he does not want to ever see her again. He says that he cannot live without his wife and his children and I believe that to be true. He wants you to forgive him and will promise anything if he can remain your husband. He asks you not to go on with your idea of divorce. I saw his face. It is the face of a good man and he is really honest and just."

She was silent and was looking vaguely in front of her. Her full cheeks, her chin, which was beginning to grow fat and her soft and sensitive mouth, showed

such kindness that Gregory thought she was going to forgive him.

"He says that you are both going to the judge this month for a separation," he went on, "and it is only after that that the real machinery of the divorce will begin. So he begs of you to think about it, because he has really changed entirely. He says he is not what he appears to be and that he is really much better than we give him credit for. I think that it is true, that he wants to work if he can find some work, and if you'll let him he'll come back to you to lead a new and repentant life."

He saw her mouth quivering and all the lower part of her face trembling. Her shoulders shook and suddenly she said:

"No."

Her tone was cutting, her attitude haughty and sorrowful and her decision irrevocable. Gregory bent his head, shut his eyes and remained silent a long time.

"Look here," he said at last, in a very different voice, cold and distant. "I am going to tell you a story which you don't know. It is the story of a man who loved a woman. I say, listen to me. He was engaged when very young to a poor girl, very beautiful and good and so beloved of God that he loved her also" . . . His eyes became very deep. " . . . with all his soul," he emphasized. Then he made an effort to remember where he had stopped and went on quickly: "So after the marriage this is what happened. The man saw that his wife not only did not love him but that she was in love with another who was their friend, who lived in their house, and who was like a brother to both of them. Then the poor husband took his wife away for a long journey, to help her to forget.

But he saw that she would always love the other man and could never love him any more so life became a hell for both. He saw his wife committing adultery first in the flesh and then in her heart and then even in her soul. She was becoming wicked and unjust. Yes," he said seriously, "it was really terrible. She was becoming impossible on account of her thwarted love, and he also because the negation was all around them. What do you think that man did? He prayed. He thought: 'I love a human being' and joyously he invited his wife and his friend into his own room and with the New Testament in front of him he said: 'Be married solemnly one with the other, before God by me.' The three of them were crying, but he said afterwards: 'Don't be afraid, I am leaving you, I'll never come back to mar your happiness!' " Gregory put his hand in front of his eyes saying in a low voice:

"Dear, what a reward from God is the remembrance of such a sacrifice!" Then he lifted his head: "And he did as he had said, he left them all his money because he was very rich and she was as poor as Job. He went away. He went to the other side of the globe and I know that he is still alone after seventeen years with no money and earning his own living as I do, as a practitioner of the Christian Scientist Society." Mme. de Fontanin looked at him, very much moved.

"Wait," he said with vivacity. His face was twisted and on the back of the chair where his elbows were resting his skeleton-like fingers joined abruptly. "The poor man thought he was leaving only happiness behind for them and that he was taking with him all the sorrow, but here is God's secret—it is evil which remained with them! They laughed at him. They betrayed the Spirit. They accepted his sacrifice crying

and in their hearts they mocked at him. They told lies about him to his neighbors. They showed his letters. They paraded his fictitious complacency and they went as far as to say that he left his wife without a penny to run after another woman in Europe. Yes, they said all these things and they got a decree of divorce against him."

He lowered his eyes a second, gave a kind of raucous cry, got up and carefully put back the chair in its place. All sorrow had disappeared from his countenance.

"Well," he went on, bending over Mme. de Fontanin who had not moved, "such love and forgiveness is so necessary that if, now, this instant that dear, perfidious woman came to me suddenly and said: 'James, I come back to you, you shall be my servant again, I shall laugh at you whenever I want.' Well, I would say to her: 'Come, take the little I have. I thank God for your return and I'll really try so hard to be good in your eyes that you will also become good: because Evil does not exist!' Yes, really, dear, if my Dolly came back to seek a refuge with me, that's what I would do and I would not say: 'Dolly, I forgive you,' but only: 'May Christ protect me!' And so my words won't be lost, because God is the only power that stops the Negative!" He was silent, crossed his arms and with his hand seized his angular chin and in the chanting tone of the preacher: "You must do the same, Madame de Fontanin, because you love that human being with all your love and Love is Justice. Christ said: 'If your Justice is not other than the scribe or Pharisee thou shalt not enter the Kingdom of God.' "

The poor woman shook her head:

"You don't know him, James," she whispered.

"The air around him is contaminated. He brings unhappiness and our peace would be destroyed again. He would be bad for the children."

"When Christ touched the leper's sores with his hand it was not Christ's hand which became affected but the leper who was cleansed."

"You say that I love him. No, it is not true! I know him too well now. I know what his promises are worth. I have forgiven him too often."

"When Peter asked Christ how many times he must forgive his brother: 'Must I forgive him seven times?' Then Christ answered: 'What is seven times? I tell you seventy times seven.' "

"I tell you, James, you don't know him!"

"Who can think: *I know my brother?* Christ said: 'Judge not that ye be not judged' and I, Gregory, say: The one who can live a sinful life without being troubled and unhappy in his heart is still far from having found the truth, but the one who cries because he is leading a sinful life is very near it. I tell you, he is full of remorse, he looked like a just man."

"James, you don't know everything. Ask him what he did when the woman had to flee away to Belgium to escape her creditors who were harassing her. She had gone away with another man but he left everything to follow them and consented to all their terms. For months he was a ticket-taker in the theater where she was singing. I tell you it is shameful. She went on living with her violinist and he accepted everything, dined at their house and played music with the lover of his mistress! The face of a just man! You don't understand him. To-day he is in Paris, full of repentance, and he says that he has left that woman, that he does not see her any more. Why is he paying her

debts, then, if not to make her his again? Because he is paying Noémie's creditors one by one. Yes, that's why he is in Paris! And with what money is he doing it? With the children's and mine! Do you know what he did three weeks ago? He mortgaged our house at Maisons-Laffite to give twenty-five thousand francs to a creditor of Noémie who was losing patience!"

She lowered her head, for she was not telling the whole truth. She remembered the meeting at the lawyer's where she had gone without distrust and where she had found Jérôme at the door waiting for her. He needed her signature for the mortgage, because the property belonged to her through an inheritance. He had begged her, giving as an excuse that he did not have a cent and was driven to suicide. He turned his pockets inside out in the street. With hardly any struggle she had given in. She had gone into the lawyer's office with him so that he would stop bothering her in the street, and also because she was herself short of money and he had promised to give her a few thousand francs which she would need for expenses during the next six months, until the settling of accounts after the divorce.

"I tell you, you don't know him, James. He swears to you that everything is different and that he wants to live with us? Let me tell you that two days ago when he came to leave Jenny's present, a hundred yards away he had left a carriage . . . and he had not come alone in the carriage!" She shivered, she could see again on the bench on the quay of the Tuileries, Jérôme and the little working-girl dressed in black who was crying. She rose: "That's the kind

of man he is," she cried out. "His moral sensibilities are so numbed that when he comes to leave a birthday present for his daughter he is accompanied by a woman he picked up in the street! And you say that I love him still! No, it is not true!" She straightened herself up. Just then she really looked as if she hated him.

Gregory looked at her severely:

"You have not the truth within you," he said; "must we render evil for evil even in our thoughts? The Spirit is everything! The Physical is the slave of the Spiritual. Christ said . . ." the barkings of Puce interrupted him. "There is your damned bearded doctor!" he grumbled and making a face, he hurried to his chair and sat down.

The door opened. Antoine entered, followed by Jacques and Daniel.

He entered resolutely, having accepted the consequences of the visit. The light from the open windows fell full upon his face; his hair and his beard formed a dark mass: all the light was concentrated upon the white rectangle of his forehead and gave him all the appearance of a man of genius. Although of medium stature, for a moment he seemed tall. Mme. de Fontanin looked at him and all her sympathy was reawakened. While he bowed to her and she shook his hand, he recognized Gregory and was annoyed to find him there. From his seat the pastor bowed familiarly to him.

Jacques looked curiously at the extraordinary man, and Gregory, still sitting astride his chair, with his chin resting upon his crossed hands, with his red nose and with an incomprehensible grin on his face, looked at the young men good naturedly. Just then Mme. de

Fontanin went over to Jacques and the expression in her eyes was so affectionate that he remembered the evening when he had cried in her arms. She was thinking about it herself because she said:

"He has grown so much that I am afraid of him." As she spoke, she kissed him, laughing a little coquettishly at the same time: "It is true that I am a mother and that you are like a brother to Daniel. . . ." But she saw that Gregory had risen and was getting ready to go: "James, you are not going yet?"

"Excuse me," he said, "I have to leave you now." He shook hands vigorously with the two brothers and came up to her.

"One word more," said Mme. de Fontanin, accompanying him outside and closing the door. "Answer me frankly. After what I told you, do you still think that Jérôme is worthy to come back to us?" She was asking him with her eyes. "Weigh your answer, James. If you tell me: 'Forgive!' I will forgive."

He was silent and his face showed that immense pity which animates those who believe that they possess the truth. He thought he saw a ray of hope in Mme. de Fontanin's eyes. Christ did not want that kind of forgiveness from her. He turned his head away and gave a disapproving snort. She took his arm and said good-by to him affectionately.

"Thank you, James. Tell him that my answer is no."

He did not hear what she said as he was praying for her.

"Let Christ dwell within your heart," he murmured, and went away without looking at her.

When she came back to the drawing-room where Antoine was looking about him and thinking of his

first visit, Mme. de Fontanin had to struggle to hide her agitation.

"How nice of you to accompany your brother," she exclaimed, rather overdoing her welcome. "Please sit here." She showed Antoine a seat beside hers. "We can't count on the young people to keep us company to-day."

Daniel had put his arm in Jacques's and took him to his room. They were now the same height. Daniel did not expect to find his friend so changed but his friendship was increased and his desire to confide in him more urgent. As soon as they were alone his face became animated and took on a mysterious expression:

"First of all I must warn you that you are going to see her. She is a cousin who lives with us, she is . . . divine!" Did he notice that Jacques was slightly embarrassed? Was he troubled by a tardy scruple? "But what about you?" he said with an amiable smile and even in this attempt at renewing their friendship he kept a rather ceremonious courtesy. "Just think! It is a year since we have seen each other." And as Jacques was silent: "Oh, nothing has happened yet," he went on, bending over him. "But I am full of hope."

Jacques was annoyed by his insistence and by the sound of his voice. He saw at last that Daniel was not quite the same as before, but he could not say in what way. His features were the same, his face a little thinner perhaps, but his mouth had the same sinuous smile accentuated by his growing mustache. He still smiled on one side of his mouth and it spoiled the symmetry of his face, showing his upper teeth on

the left side. Also his eyes seemed to shine less clearly and his eyebrows bent more towards the temples than they used to and it gave his eyes a kind of sly look. And his voice and manner were much more casual.

Jacques was examining Daniel and forgot to answer him. Perhaps on account of that impertinent nonchalance which annoyed and delighted him at the same time, suddenly the same affection he had felt for his friend while still in the lycée returned, and his eyes filled with tears.

"Well, tell me what you have been doing all this time. Tell me!" exclaimed Daniel, who could not remain quiet and who had to sit down to force himself to be attentive.

His attitude seemed to show the truest affection but Jacques perceived a forced note which embarrassed him. In spite of it, however, he began to speak of his stay at the reformatory and without precisely wanting to, he used the same literary clichés he had used when talking to Lisbeth. He was ashamed to tell the naked truth about his daily life there.

"But why did you not write to me oftener?"

Jacques avoided telling the real reason, his desire to protect his father from hostile criticism, although this of course did not prevent him in his own mind from disapproving of M. Thibault in everything.

"Solitude you know changes people," he explained after a pause and the thought of it made his face grow stupid. "You become indifferent to everything and oppressed by a vague kind of fear which is always present. You act without thinking of anything and in the end you hardly know who you are, or that you exist, and the end is death or madness," he added, looking in front of him interrogatively. He shivered

slightly, and changing his tone, described Antoine's visit to Crouy.

Daniel listened to him without interrupting but as soon as he saw the end of Jacques's confession approaching, his face became animated again.

"I did not even tell you her name," he said. "Nicole. Do you like it?"

"Very much," said Jacques, who for the first time thought of the Christian name Lisbeth.

"That name suits her, I think. You'll see. She is not very pretty, but she is more than pretty, unspoiled, full of life and with sunny eyes!" He hesitated. "She is appetizing, do you understand?"

Jacques avoided his eyes. He wanted also to speak openly of his love and had come for that purpose, but from the moment of Daniel's first confidence he had felt ill at ease and even now he was listening with lowered gaze and with a feeling of constraint and almost of shame.

"This morning," Daniel continued, hiding his joy very badly, "mother and Jenny went out early, so we were alone at tea time, Nicole and I. Alone in the apartment. She was not dressed yet. It was delightful. I followed her into Jenny's room where she sleeps. So, old man, that room, that young girl's bed . . . I held her in my arms for an instant. She fought me off but was laughing all the time. She is so supple. Then she got away from me and shut herself up in mother's room and refused to open the door. . . . I am telling you this and it is idiotic," he went on, getting up. He even tried to smile but his lips would not obey him.

"You want to marry her?" asked Jacques.

"I?"

Jacques felt as if he had been insulted. As every minute went by he felt his friend becoming more of a stranger to him. An inquisitive and mocking glance of Daniel's froze his impulse.

"But what about you?" asked Daniel, going nearer. "According to your letter, you also . . ." Jacques, with his eyes still lowered, shook his head. He seemed to say: "No, this is the end, I won't tell you anything about myself." Youthful voices could be heard and without waiting for an answer Daniel rose.

"You'll tell me. . . . Here they are, come along!" He looked into the mirror, lifted his head and went quickly into the passage.

Mme. de Fontanin was calling: "Children, come to tea. . . ."

Tea was served in the dining-room. From the door Jacques, his heart beating furiously, saw two young girls sitting at the table. They had their hats and their gloves on and their walk had made their cheeks redder than usual. Jenny came up to Daniel and hung upon his arm. He paid no attention to her and pushing Jacques towards Nicole introduced them to each other in a free and happy manner. Jacques felt Nicole's curiosity and Jenny's too and turned to look at Mme. de Fontanin who, standing with Antoine in the door of the drawing-room, was finishing her conversation: ". . . to make children aware," she was saying, smiling sadly, "that there is nothing more precious than life and that it is incredibly short."

It was a long time since Jacques had found himself among strangers and the spectacle interested him so much that he forgot all his shyness. Jenny appeared to him small and rather ugly beside Nicole, who had so much brightness and natural grace. Just then she was

talking and laughing with Daniel. Jacques could not distinguish their words. She lifted her eyebrows continuously to show her astonishment or her joy. Her steel blue eyes were rather prominent, too far apart and a little too round but they were luminous and gay and gave continuous animation to her white, well rounded face. It looked rather heavy on account of a thick braid of hair rolled around her head. She had a way of thrusting her head forward which gave her the air of always running to meet a friend, and in so doing offered to everyone the attractiveness of her smile. While looking at her Jacques could not help thinking about Daniel's word which he had disliked so much: appetizing. . . . She felt his scrutiny and lost her naturalness at once by exaggerating it.

Jacques never tried to hide the interest he felt for people. He had the ingenuousness of a child staring with his mouth open. Before his stay at Crouy he would elbow his way through crowds of people with such indifference that he never noticed them. Now, whenever he found himself in a shop, or in the street, he always looked at the passers-by. He did not analyze what interested him in them, but his brain worked without his knowing it. It was enough for him to catch unusual expressions or attitudes and these unknown people met by chance became in his imagination distinct people to whom he attributed individual characteristics.

Mme. de Fontanin interrupted his day-dreaming by laying her hand upon his arm.

"Come and sit beside me," she said. "Pay me a visit." She gave him a cup and a plate. "I am so happy to see you here. Jenny, my dear, offer us some cake. Your brother has been telling me about your

life in your own apartment. I am delighted. Two brothers who get along as two friends, it is such a lovely thing. I am delighted that Daniel and Jenny get along very well. Well, my son, it makes you smile," she said to Daniel, who was coming over to them with Antoine. "He must always mock his old mother. For your punishment you'll kiss me in front of everybody."

Daniel laughed, a little embarrassed but bent down and touched his mother's temple lightly with his lips. His slightest movement was full of gracefulness.

Jenny was watching them from the other side of the table and her delicate smile charmed Antoine. She could not help hanging again upon Daniel's arm. "Another one," thought Antoine, "who gives more than she receives." The mature expression of her childish face had intrigued him upon his first visit. He saw the pretty movement of her shoulders when she straightened herself up. She did not look at all like her mother or like Daniel either and it was not surprising, for she appeared to be born for a different kind of life.

Mme. de Fontanin was sipping her tea, holding her cup very close to her smiling face; through the steam she was beaming at Jacques. Her look, full of brightness and kindness, gave an impression of light and warmth and her white hair shone like a wonderful crown around her wide, youthful forehead. Jacques looked from the mother to the son. . . . He loved them both just at that minute so ardently that he wished they could be aware of it as he felt intensely the need of being understood. His curiosity about human beings went so far as to try to get into their intimate thoughts and to mingle his life with theirs.

In front of the window Nicole and Jenny were arguing and Daniel went to join in the discussion. The three of them bent over the camera trying to find out if there was still another film.

"To please me!" said Daniel suddenly with the warm voice which was new to Jacques, looking caressingly and imperiously at Nicole. "Yes! Just as you are with your hat on and with my friend Thibault."

"Jacques!" he called and in a lower tone: "Please, I want so much to take the two of you together!"

Jacques joined them and Daniel forced them to go to the drawing-room. He said the light was better.

Mme. de Fontanin and Antoine lingered in the dining-room.

"I don't want you to misunderstand this visit," Antoine was concluding with the roughness which gave to his words the appearance of frankness. "If he knew that Jacques was here and that I brought him, I believe he would take my brother away from me and everything would begin all over again."

"Poor man," murmured Mme. de Fontanin in such a tone that Antoine smiled:

"You pity him?"

"I pity him for being unable to appreciate two sons like you."

"It is not his fault and it is not mine either. My father is what is commonly known as an eminent and respectable man. I respect him. But what do you expect? We never think alike on any subject, I won't say alike, but even in an analogous manner. We have never been able to look at any subject from the same point of view."

"We do not all have the light."

"If you are thinking about religion," said Antoine quickly, "my father is an exceedingly religious man!"

Mme. de Fontanin shook her head.

"Paul the Apostle agreed even in his time that it is not those who follow the letter of the Law who are justified before God but those who live according to the Law."

Though she thought she was pitying M. Thibault with all her heart she really felt a strong and instinctive antipathy for him. The interdiction of which her son, her house and herself were the object, appeared to her abominably unjust and inspired by the worst possible motives. Remembering with disgust the appearance of the fat man, she could not forgive him for his attitude towards the things she valued most highly, her nobleness of mind and her Protestantism, and on that account she was the more grateful to Antoine for having disregarded his father's judgment.

"What about you," she asked suddenly, full of apprehension, "do you still go to church?"

He shook his head and she was so glad that her face lighted up.

"It is true that I did until very recently," he explained. It seemed to him that Mme. de Fontanin's presence made him more lucid and assuredly it made him more communicative. She had a charming way of listening which added to her interlocutors' assurance and encouraged them to rise above their ordinary level for her sake. "I went as a matter of routine and without any real piety. God was, for me, a kind of head-master whom nothing escaped and whom it was prudent to keep pacified with certain actions and by observing a certain discipline. I obeyed but I was bored by it. I was a good pupil in everything even

in religion. How did I lose my faith? I have forgotten. When I became aware of it—only four or five years ago—I had already in other ways attained a knowledge of science which left very little room for religious beliefs. I am a positivist," he said with a feeling of pride. To tell the truth, as he went along he expressed ideas which were new to him, as he very seldom had any occasion or any leisure to analyze himself so complacently. "I do not say that science explains everything but it checks up facts and for me that's enough. The *hows* interest me enough to give up without any regrets the vain pursuit of the *whys*." He added, quickly lowering his voice: "Between those two orders of explanation there is, after all, only a difference of degree." He smiled as if to excuse himself. "As for morality," he went on, "well, it does not worry me much. I horrify you? You see, I love my work. I love life, I am full of energy and I feel that my activity is a rule of conduct in itself. In any case, up till now, I have never hesitated about what I had to do."

Mme. de Fontanin did not answer. She was not angry with Antoine for showing himself to be so different from her. But she thanked God the more that He was so constantly in her heart. She gained from His presence a superabundant and joyful confidence which truly shone around her to such an extent that although she was being always buffeted by life and much unhappier than most people she knew, she had the privilege of being for everybody a source of courage, of steadiness and of happiness. Antoine just then was feeling this and he had never met anyone among his father's acquaintances who inspired in him this comforting veneration and around whom the atmosphere

was so exalting and so pure. He wanted to go further in her direction even at the expense of truth.

"Protestantism has always attracted me," he asserted, although he had never thought about it before knowing the Fontanins. "Your Reformation was the Revolution of religion. There are in your religion principles of emancipation. . . ."

She was listening to him with a growing sympathy. He appeared to her young, full of ardor and chivalry. She admired his alert face, the furrows which concentration had traced upon his forehead and as he lifted his head, she had a childish joy in discovering in his features an earnestness which added to the thoughtfulness of his expression. His upper eyelids were so narrow that they nearly disappeared under the frontal bone when his eyes were wide open, to such an extent that the eyelashes almost joined the eyebrows. She thought that a person with such a forehead could be incapable of baseness. Then this idea went through her head: Antoine is the personification of a man worthy of being loved. She was still full of resentment against her husband. "To tie one's life to a man like that. . . ." For the first time she was comparing someone with Jérôme and it was the first time that she felt a definite regret and had the suspicion that somebody else might have given her happiness. It was only a fleeting thought but violent enough to disturb her to the depths of her being. She was ashamed of it at once and mastered it then and there, but the bitterness left by her contrition and perhaps by her regret disappeared more slowly.

Her imagination was freed once more by the entrance of Jenny and Jacques. As soon as she saw

them, she called them to her with a welcoming gesture, being afraid that they might think their presence unwelcome. But she saw at a glance that something had happened between them.

She was right.

As soon as he had taken Nicole and Jacques's photo, Daniel had offered to see at once if the picture was a success. In the morning he had promised Jenny and his cousin to show them how to develop the films and they had already everything necessary in an unused cupboard situated at the end of the passage and used by Daniel as a dark room. The cupboard was so narrow that it was very uncomfortable with more than two people. So Daniel had managed in such a way that Nicole entered first, then going to Jenny and laying a feverish hand upon her shoulder, he had whispered in her ear:

"Stay with Thibault."

She had looked at him in a disapproving manner but she had consented. Her brother's influence was so strong and his way of asking in a commanding voice, with a bold look and an impatient attitude, was so irresistible that his commands were always obeyed at once.

During this short interlude Jacques had remained behind looking at a glass case in the drawing-room. Jenny joined him and thinking he had not seen Daniel's maneuvering said poutingly:

"Do you also take photographs?"

"No."

His answer was a little embarrassed and she saw that she ought not to have asked him such a question. She remembered that he had just been shut up for a long time in a kind of cell. Through an association

of ideas and in order to say something, she went on:

"You have not seen Daniel for a long time?"

He lowered his eyes.

"No, not for a long time. Since . . . More than a year ago."

A shadow crossed Jenny's face. Her second attempt had not been any better than the first. She seemed to have wanted to remind Jacques of the Marseilles escapade. She had always felt annoyed with him about that. He alone was responsible in her eyes. She had disliked him a long time ago without knowing him. Seeing him that evening at tea time she remembered in spite of herself the harm he had caused them and he had displeased her as soon as she saw him. She thought him ugly and even vulgar on account of his big head with its bad features, his heavy jaw, his chapped lips, his big ears and his red hair standing up like ripe corn around his forehead. She could not forgive Daniel for his attachment to such a comrade and that one who shared her brother's affection with her should be so unattractive.

She had taken the small dog upon her knee and was caressing her abstractedly. Jacques looked at his feet, thinking also about his flight and about the first evening he had crossed the threshold of that house.

"Do you think he has changed a great deal?" she asked at last to break the silence.

"No," he said, but correcting himself at once, "and yet, yes, a great deal."

She saw how scrupulous he was and was grateful to him for being sincere and for a moment he was less antipathetic to her.

Did Jacques feel this slight change in her attitude? He stopped thinking about Daniel. He was looking at

Jenny and was asking himself questions about her. He would have been unable to express what he could guess of her nature, yet, on her expressive but secretive face, in the depths of her vivacious but reticent eyes, he saw her nervous instability and her acute sensitiveness. The idea came to him that it would be delightful to know her better, to penetrate to the secrets of her closed heart, to become her friend. To love her. He dreamt about it for a moment, a moment full of happiness. He had forgotten all his past misfortunes and it seemed to him that it would be impossible to be unhappy again. He looked all around the room just glancing at Jenny with a mixture of interest and shyness which prevented his seeing how much the young girl was still on the defensive. Suddenly through a fatal twist of his thoughts Lisbeth appeared to him as a small, familiar, domestic thing, hardly worth considering at all. To marry Lisbeth? For the first time he saw how his love for Lisbeth was puerile. Suddenly he had a feeling of emptiness, of a dreadful emptiness which had to be filled at any cost—and Jenny would naturally fill it but . . .

" . . . in a lycée?"

He started. She was speaking to him.

"I beg your pardon?"

"You go to a lycée?"

"Not yet," he said rather troubled: "I am very backward. I am taking lessons with some tutors, friends of my brother." And he added without any bad intention: "What about you?" She was offended that he dared ask her questions and moreover in such a friendly tone. She answered shortly:

"No, I don't go to any school, I work with a visiting governess."

He said very untactfully:

"Of course, for a girl, it really does not matter."

She retorted:

"Mother thinks it does, and so does Daniel."

She was now looking at him with frankly hostile eyes. He saw his blunder and tried to make up for it, thinking he was saying something amiable:

"A girl always knows enough."

He understood he was getting in worse but he could neither control his thoughts nor his words and he felt that the reformatory had made an idiot of him. He blushed and suddenly the heat coming to his head made him lose his temper. He saw no other way out of it but anger. He tried to find something to say to avenge himself but could not, completely lost control of himself and finally said with that vulgar taunting manner which his father often used:

"The most important thing is not taught in schools. That is to have a good temper!"

She mastered herself to such a point that she did not even shrug her shoulders but as Puce had just yawned noisily:

"Oh, the nasty little thing! The rude little thing!" and her voice as she spoke trembled with rage.

"Rude thing!" she repeated once more with a triumphant insistence. Then she put down the dog, rose and went out upon the balcony.

Five long minutes went by in an intolerable silence. Jacques had not moved from his chair and he was choking with anger. In the dining-room Mme. de Fontanin's voice could be heard alternately with Antoine's. Jenny had turned her back to him, and was humming one of her piano pieces and her foot was beating time with impertinence. She was going to tell her brother

everything so that he would give up this ill-bred boy! She hated him and was looking at him out of the corner of her eye. She saw he was red and dignified, and her impertinence increased. She thought of the thing that could hurt him most.

"Come on, Puce! I am going away," and leaving the balcony she passed in front of him as if he did not exist and went slowly towards the dining-room.

Jacques was afraid above everything else to remain there alone not knowing how to go away afterwards. So he followed her without, however, accompanying her.

Mme. de Fontanin's amiability changed his resentment to melancholy.

"So your brother left you?" she said to her daughter.

Jenny turned her face away and said:

"I asked Daniel to develop my film at once. It will only take a short time."

She avoided looking at Jacques, knowing quite well that he was not deceived and this involuntary complicity increased their enmity. He thought she was a liar and he disapproved of her pandering in hiding her brother's conduct. She saw that he felt this way about her and her pride was hurt.

Mme. de Fontanin smiled at them and made them sit down.

Antoine said: "My young patient has been growing fast."

Jacques was silent and looked down. He was very miserable, and felt he would never be the same as before. He felt he was sick, sick within his soul, weak and brutal at the same time, slave of his impulses and the plaything of an inexorable fate.

"Are you musical?" Mme. de Fontanin asked him.

He looked at her as if he did not understand what she was saying. His eyes filled with tears and he bent down quickly as if to tie his shoe lace. He heard Antoine answering for him. His ears were buzzing. He wished he could die. Was Jenny looking at him?

Daniel and Nicole had disappeared more than a quarter of an hour before in the dark room.

Daniel had bolted the door quickly and taken the films out of the camera.

"Don't touch the door," he said, "the slightest ray of light would spoil the whole film."

At first blinded by the obscurity, Nicole saw quite near her the glowing shadows moving in their halo of the lantern and little by little she perceived two ghostly hands, long, fine and severed at the wrists, which were balancing a small basin. She could only see those two animated stumps, but the cupboard was so narrow that she felt every one of Daniel's movements as if he had pressed against her. They were holding their breath and were both obsessed by the thought of the kiss in her room.

"Can you . . . see anything yet?" she whispered. He did not answer at once for he was enjoying the delightful sensation which that silence gave him and as he was free of any restraint because of the darkness he turned towards Nicole.

"No, not yet," he stressed at last.

Another silence. Then the small basin that Nicole was following with her eyes stopped moving and the two glowing red hands deserted the light of the lamp. It was an interminable moment. Suddenly she felt herself seized round the waist. She was not surprised

and almost glad not to be in suspense any more, but she threw herself backwards to the right and to the left to avoid Daniel's mouth, which she wanted and feared at the same time. At last their faces met. Daniel's forehead touched something elastic, cold and smooth. It was Nicole's plait. Unable to repress a shiver he recoiled quickly, she seized the opportunity to get away from his lips, and had just time enough to shout:

"Jenny!"

He smothered her cry with his hands and standing with all the weight of his body against Nicole's, he held her against the door, muttering between his teeth as if he were delirious:

"Please stop, let me . . . Nicole . . . Darling. I adore you. . . . Listen to me."

Her resistance lessened and he thought she was giving in. She had put her arm behind her and she was searching for the bolt. Suddenly the door gave way and a flood of light invaded the darkness. He let her go and shut the door. But she had seen his face. It was unrecognizable! It was like a Chinese mask, deadly pale with pinkish spots round the eyes which elongated them towards the temples. The pupils were small and expressionless and his mouth which a while ago had been so thin, was now swollen and half-opened . . . Jérôme! He did not look very much like his father but in that pitiless ray of light she had seen Jérôme!

"My compliments!" he said in a hissing voice. "The whole film is ruined."

She answered quietly:

"I am willing to stay, as I want to talk to you, but unbolt the door first."

"No. Jenny is coming soon."

She hesitated a while and then:

"Well, swear to me that you won't try to touch me any more."

He wanted to jump upon her, to smother her cries with his fists, to tear her blouse, but at the same time he felt he had lost.

"I swear," he said.

"Well, then, listen to me, Daniel. I . . . I have let you go very far, much too far. I was wrong this morning. No. I say no. It is not for that kind of thing that I escaped from my mother." She spoke the last words quickly for herself alone. She went on, for Daniel: "I must tell you my secret; I ran away from mother. There is nothing to be said against her except that she is a very unhappy woman and easily . . . led. I can't tell you anything else." She paused. The execrated face of Jérôme remained in front of her. The son would make of her what she thought Jérôme had made of her mother. "You don't know me well," she went on hastily, because she was frightened by Daniel's silence. "Of course, it is my fault and I know it. I have now shown myself to you as I really am. With Jenny, yes. With you, I have let myself go and you believed. . . . But really, no, not that. . . . I don't want my life to begin that way. . . . If I had . . . would it have been worth the trouble to come to a woman like Aunt Thérèse! No, I want . . . You are going to laugh at me, but I don't care, I want to be able to later on . . . to deserve the respect of the man who will love me always . . . of a serious man, in a word . . ."

"But I am serious," Daniel ventured with a piteous smile, she guessed by the sound of his voice. She felt at once that all danger was past.

"Certainly not," she said almost gayly. "Don't be angry at what I am going to tell you, Daniel. You don't love me."

"Oh!"

"No. It is not I whom you love, it is . . . something else and I also do not . . . Listen. I am going to be very frank. I believe that I will never be able to love a man like you."

"Like me?"

"I mean to say, a man like all the others. . . . I want . . . to love . . . yes, later on, but then it will be somebody, well, somebody pure who will come to me in a different way, for another thing. . . . I don't know how to explain it to you. Well, a man very different from you."

"Thank you!"

His desire for her had gone and he thought of nothing except to avoid appearing ridiculous.

"Now," she went on, "let us make peace and we won't think about it any more." She opened the door and this time he did not prevent her. "Friends?" she said, holding out her hand to him. He did not answer. He was looking at her teeth, her eyes, her skin, her blossom-like face. He smiled wryly and his eyelids fluttered. She took his hand and shook it.

"Don't ruin my life," she whispered in a coaxing tone, and raising her eyelashes in a funny way, "a roll of films, that's quite enough for to-day."

He condescended to laugh. She did not ask for so much and she felt a little sad, but on the whole she was rather proud of her victory and of what he would think about her later on.

"Well?" Jenny shouted as soon as they reappeared n the dinning-room.

"Spoiled," said Daniel dryly.

Jacques, who was jealous, felt rather pleased. Nicole smiled maliciously:

"Completely spoiled!" she repeated. But seeing Jenny turn away her angry face, with tears welling up in her eyes, she went up to her and kissed her.

Jacques had, since his friend's entrance, stopped thinking about himself and could not take his attention away from Daniel. Daniel's face had a new expression, very painful to see. There was a contradiction between the upper and lower part of his face, a discord between his veiled and furtive look and the cynical smile which turned up his lip and pulled all his features to the left.

Their eyes met, Daniel frowned slightly and changed his position.

This distrust wounded Jacques more deeply than anything else. Since his arrival Daniel had deceived him all the time. He at last was conscious of it. There had not been one minute of real contact between them. He had not even been able to tell his friend Lisbeth's name! For a moment he thought he was suffering from disillusionment, but he was suffering most, without, however, realizing it, because he had dared for the first time to pass judgment on the object of his love and by doing so had made himself the poorer. Like all children he lived only in the present because the past disappeared too quickly in oblivion and the future made him impatient. The present, that day, seemed to be obstinately full of bitterness and his afternoon was ending in a profound discouragement. And when Antoine beckoned to him to get ready to go he felt relieved.

Daniel saw Antoine's gesture and went quickly to Jacques.

"You are not going yet?"

"Oh, yes!"

"So soon?" he added in a lower tone: "We have seen so little of each other."

He also was disappointed and a little remorseful. What saddened him most was that he feared he had been unworthy of their friendship.

"Excuse me," he said suddenly, pushing Jacques towards the window in such a humble way that Jacques forgot all his misadventures and felt himself glowing with all his past love. "To-day was a bad day. When shall I see you again?" Daniel went on in a very caressing voice: "I must see you alone and for a great while. We don't know each other very well any more. It is not extraordinary, of course. Think of it, we have not seen each other for a whole year! But we must become acquainted again."

He asked himself suddenly what would become of this friendship which nothing had fed for such a long time, except a mysterious fidelity whose fragility they had both just tested. They could not let it die! Jacques appeared rather childish to him but his affection for him was still intact. Who knows? Maybe it was all the keener because he felt himself to be the older of the two.

"We are at home every Sunday," Mme. de Fontanin was telling Antoine at the same time. "We only leave Paris after the distribution of prizes at the lycée." Her eyes shone. "Daniel always gets prizes," she whispered, without hiding her pride. "Here," she added abruptly, making sure that her son had his back turned and could not hear her. "Come, I want to show

you my treasures." She went gayly towards her room and Antoine followed her. In a drawer of her desk about twenty imitation laurel crowns of cardboard were carefully arranged. She shut the drawer almost at once and laughed as if she were rather ashamed at having given way to such childishness. "Don't tell Daniel," she said, "he does not know that I keep these trophies."

In silence they went back to the hall.

"Well, Jacques!" called Antoine.

"To-day does not count," Mme. de Fontanin said to Jacques, holding out both hands to him and looking at him insistingly as if she had guessed everything.

"You have friends here, Jacques, and any time you want to come you'll be welcome and your big brother also, naturally," she went on, turning to him with a very graceful movement.

Jacques's eyes were seeking Jenny but she had disappeared with her cousin. He bent down to the little dog and kissed her satin-like head.

Mme. de Fontanin went back to the dining-room to put the table in order. Daniel, who unconsciously was following her, stood against the side of the door, lit a cigarette and did not speak. He was thinking about what Nicole had said to him. Why had he not been told that his cousin had run away from home and had taken refuge with them? A refuge from what?

Mme. de Fontanin went to and fro with that ease of movement which made her seem a young woman. She was thinking about Antoine's conversation and all she had learnt about him, about his studies and his plans for the future, about his father. "A faithful heart," she was saying to herself, "and such a beautiful forehead. . . ." She tried to think of an epithet:

"Meditative," she added joyfully. She remembered then the idea that had crossed her mind for a second. Had she not sinned also? Gregory's words came back to her. Suddenly, without any definite reason to account for it, she felt within herself such a flow of joy that she put down the plate she held to touch her face with her fingers. It seemed to her she would be able to feel the joy upon her features. She came up to her son who was very much surprised and laid her hands gayly upon his shoulders, looked straight into his eyes and without uttering a word kissed him and left the room quickly.

She went straight to her desk and with her big childish writing a little unsteady she wrote:

"My dear James,

"I have been very proud. Who among us has the right to pass judgment? I thank God for having shown me the way once more. Tell Jérôme I give up the idea of asking for a divorce. Tell him . . ."

The words were dancing through her tears.

XII

Some days later Antoine was awakened just as the dawn was breaking by knocks on the shutters. The rag-man could find no one to open the outer door although he could hear the bell ring in the concierge's lodgings and he feared something had gone wrong.

He was right. Mother Fruhling was dead. An attack which proved to be her last had seized her at the foot of her bed.

Jacques arrived just as they were laying the old woman on the bed. Her half-opened mouth showed her yellow teeth and reminded him of something horrible. Yes, that was it, the corpse of the gray horse upon the road to Toulon. Suddenly he thought that maybe Lisbeth would come back.

Two days went by. She was not coming, she would not be coming. All the better. He did not probe his feelings. Even after his first visit to the Avenue de l'Observatoire he had gone on working upon a poem in which he was celebrating his well-beloved and was lamenting her exile. But he did not really wish to see her again.

And yet he passed the concierge's door ten times a day and each time he looked in anxiously and each time he went away reassured but unsatisfied.

The day before the burial, as he was entering the house after dining alone, in the small restaurant where he and Antoine took their meals since M. Thibault's

departure for Maisons-Laffite, the first thing that caught his eye was an abandoned suitcase at the door of the concierge's apartment. He was seized by a trembling and his forehead became covered with perspiration. In the light of the candles around the coffin, a child's figure in mourning veils could be seen kneeling. Without any hesitation he entered. The two nuns looked at him with indifference but Lisbeth did not turn around. The evening was heavy with storm, a warm, sugary smell filled the room, flowers were fading upon the coffin. Jacques remained standing, sorry that he had gone in, for all this funeral array made him really sick. He was thinking no longer of Lisbeth and was watching for an opportunity to get away. One of the nuns got up to snuff one of the candles and he made his exit.

Had Lisbeth guessed his presence, recognized his step? She joined him before he reached the door of his apartment. Jacques turned back when he heard her coming. They remained some moments facing each other in a dark corner of the stairs. She was crying under her lowered veils, without seeing the hand Jacques had held out to her. He would have liked to cry also, for the sake of something to do, but he felt nothing except a little boredom and shyness.

A door banged upstairs. Jacques was afraid he would be caught there and he took out his keys, but the darkness and his embarrassment prevented him from finding the keyhole.

"It may not be the right key?" she suggested. He was quite upset by the drawling sound of her voice. At last the door opened and she hesitated as the other tenant started to come down.

"Antoine is on duty," whispered Jacques, to decide

her. She felt herself blushing but went in without any trace of embarrassment.

When he had closed the door and put on the light he saw that she had gone straight to his room and that she had seated herself on the sofa as she used to do. Through the crêpe he saw her swollen eyelids and her face made ugly by tears but transfigured by her sorrow. He saw that one of her fingers was wrapped up. He was afraid to sit down and he could not get out of his mind the sad circumstances of her return.

"How stifling it is," she said; "we are going to have a storm."

She moved a little and seemed to invite Jacques to take the place she was making for him beside her. He sat down and at once without a word, without taking off her veil, just pushing it aside, she laid her face close against his as she used to do. The contact of her wet cheek was disagreeable to him. The crêpe veil smelt of dye and varnish. He did not know what to do or what to say. He wanted to take her hand. She uttered a cry:

"You are hurt?"

"Ach! It is . . . a whitlow," she sighed.

There was a little of everything in her sigh; her aching finger, her sorrow, her unrequited love. She was unrolling the wrappings and when the finger appeared, lifeless, livid, the nail loose because of the abscess, Jacques felt his breathing stop, and was dizzy for a second, as if she had suddenly uncovered a secret part of her body. Through her clothes he could feel her warmth. She turned her china blue eyes towards him and, as always, they seemed to be beseeching him not to hurt her and then in spite of his disgust he wanted to kiss the aching hand to make it well. But

she had risen and was rolling the bandage around her finger.

"I must go back," she said.

She looked so tired that he said: "Let me make you a cup of tea? Will you?" She looked at him strangely and then smiled.

"All right. I am going to say a short prayer for the dead and then I'll be back."

He hastened to heat the water, to prepare the tea and to carry it to his room. Lisbeth had not come back. He sat down. He wanted her to come back at once. He felt something which he did not try to understand. Why did she not come back? He was afraid to call, to grudge her to Mother Fruhling. But why was she waiting so long? Time was passing. Every minute he went to feel the teapot and when the tea had become cold he had no excuse for getting up, so he stayed quiet. His eyes ached from looking at the lamp, he felt feverish through impatience and his nerves were stung to the quick by the lightning coming through the shutters. Would she ever come back! He felt numb and unhappy—unhappy enough to lie down and die.

A dull rumbling. Boom! the teapot had burst! All right, he was glad of it! The tea fell like a rain on the curtains. Lisbeth is drenched by it and the water runs down her cheeks, the dye of her crêpe veil runs and it becomes pale, as pale and as transparent as the veil of a bride. . . .

Jacques started. She had sat down and laid her cheek against his.

"You were asleep, *Liebling?*"

She had never said *du* to him before. She had taken off her veil and half-asleep he held her close again and

in spite of her tired eyes, she was his own Lisbeth. She shrugged her shoulders languorously.

"Now," she said, "my uncle will marry me."

She bent her head. Was she crying? Her accent had been plaintive but resigned and who knows if she did not feel some curiosity about her future with him?

Jacques did not analyze things as far in advance as that. He wanted her to be unhappy for he was feeling such a delight in pitying her just then. He gathered her in his arms and held her tighter and tighter, as if he wanted her to melt into him. She sought his mouth which he gave her avidly. He had never felt so uplifted before. Doubtlessly she had undone her blouse in advance as he had felt the delightful warmth of her naked breasts at once.

Then she turned in such a way that Jacques's hand could move freely to and fro over her body freely.

"Let us pray together for Mother Fruhling's soul," she murmured.

He did not feel like smiling and was ready to believe that he was praying, so ardent were his caresses.

Suddenly she freed herself with a kind of moan and he thought he had touched her sore finger or else that she was going away, but she had only risen to put out the light. She was coming back to him. He heard the word *"Liebling!"* against his ear, then he felt an insinuating mouth seeking his for the second time.

A loud thunderclap woke him up. The rain was falling noisily on the flagstones in the courtyard. Where was Lisbeth? It was pitch dark and he was alone on the rumpled sofa. He thought of getting up and look-

ing for her and he even started to raise himself upon his elbow but he was unable to fight against sleep and fell back upon the cushions.

When he opened his eyes at last, it was full daylight.

He saw the teapot upon the table and his coat in a lump on the floor. Then he remembered. He got up. An irresistible impulse made him take off at once the clothes he had on and wash his moist body. The coolness of the tub awakened him completely and still wet he began to walk about the room, stretching himself, feeling his nervous legs and his cool skin with an absolute forgetfulness of the shameful recollection this complacent admiration of his nakedness might have recalled to him. The mirror reflected his slim figure and for the first time in a long while he was able to contemplate his body without any excitement. At the thought of his secret vices, he shrugged his shoulders and smiled indulgently. "Schoolboys' tricks," he thought. That chapter of his past seemed closed and the forces he had misused for a long time had found their proper course at last. Without thinking very precisely about what had happened that night, without even thinking about Lisbeth, he felt happy and his soul and body seemed purified. He did not think that he had discovered an equilibrium which had been lost, like a convalescing patient who is pleased but not astonished by his recovery.

Still naked he went in the hall and opened the outer door a little. He thought he could see in the shadows of the concierge's room Lisbeth wrapped in her crêpe veil kneeling as she had the evening before. Men up on ladders were draping the apartment entrance with black. He remembered that the funeral was to take

place at nine o'clock and he dressed quickly as for a party.

He was still tidying his room when M. Thibault, who had come back on purpose from Maisons-Laffite, called for him.

He followed the funeral procession with his father. In the church he filed past with the others, among all those people who did not know, and shook Lisbeth's hands without emotion and with a certain feeling of familiar superiority.

All day the concierge's apartment remained empty. Jacques was expecting Lisbeth at any moment without formulating definitely the desire hidden under his impatience.

At four o'clock somebody rang and he went to open the door. It was his Latin teacher! He had forgotten that he had a lesson that day.

He was following inattentively some explanation of Horace when the bell rang again. That time it was she. From the threshold she saw through the open door of his room the teacher bending over the table. For a few moments their eyes met questioningly. Jacques was far from suspecting that she had come to say good-by and that she was going away by the six o'clock train. He was afraid to say anything, but she shivered slightly, her eyelids quivered and she raised her sore finger to her mouth, then, although he was quite near and as if already the train were taking her away forever, she threw him a quick kiss and ran away.

The tutor went on with the interrupted sentence:

"*Purpurarum usus* is the same as *purpura qua utuntur* with a shade of difference. Can you feel the *nuance?*"

Jacques was smiling as if he did. He was thinking

that Lisbeth would be coming back to him later; he was seeing her again in the darkness of the hall, her face under the lifted veil and the kiss which seemed to have been torn from her lips with her bandaged finger.

"Go on," said the teacher.

END OF VOLUME I

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